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ROMANCE OF ROMAN VILLAS.

ROMANCE OF IMPERIAL ROME.

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THE ISLE OF DEATH

From the painting by Arnold Boecklin

ROMANCE OF IMPERIAL ROME

BY

ELIZABETH W. CHAMPNEY

AUTHOR OF "ROMANCE OF THE FEUDAL CHÂTEAUX," "ROMANCE OF THE RENAISSANCE CHÂTEAUX," "ROMANCE OF FRENCH ABBEYS," "ROMANCE OF THE ITALIAN VILLAS," etc.

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WITH 60 PHOTOGRAVURE AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

MY ALMA MATER

VASSAR COLLEGE

WHO, LONG BEFORE MY FEET TROD THE PALATINE, MADE ROME

THE CITY OF MY HEART, AND HER LONG-VANISHED

MEN AND WOMEN THE COMPANIONS

OF MY DREAMS

INTRODUCTION

And ye silent, supreme in serene and victorious marble,
Ye that encircle the walls of the stately Vatican chambers,
Juno and Ceres, Minerva, Apollo, the Muses, and Bacchus,
Ye that are ranged in the halls of the mystic Christian pontiff,
Are ye also baptised? Are ye of the Kingdom of Heaven?
Utter, O some one, the word that shall reconcile Ancient and Modern.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

STANDING where the poet stood in the Rotunda of the Vatican, the focus of the art and faith of ancient Rome, we seem to hear the plea he voiced echoed by the majestic statues of the gods and their vo-

taries, whose faces regard us with such calm confidence as though still trusting in the protection of the divinities whom in life they worshipped.

For here is the beautiful Barberini Juno, patroness alike of empresses and of all noble women, here the god of brute force, Hercules, too highly venerated by Roman men,—with the Emperor Hadrian appropriately wavering between the sway of the masterful deity and that of Ceres, goddess of peaceful country-life, who calls him to his Tiburtine villa.

Here too is Faustina the elder, her queenly head averted from the lure of Bacchus, though he presents himself in the guise of the entrancing Antonius; and here, as we tread the nereid-tesselated pavement round, we recognise the stately statues of other dethroned divinities and the appealing faces of imperial men and women all demanding in the name of our common humanity a fuller comprehension and a more generous sympathy.

In the Hall of the Emperors of the Capitoline Museum, the demand is still more compelling, for here are crowded eighty-three portrait busts of the Cæsars and their families, portraits of such vivid personality that we soon regard them as acquaintances. As Story

SEA GOD, JUNO, ANTINOUS, HERCULES, HADRIAN, CERES, FAUSTINA, ANTINOUS, ZEUS

SALA ROTONDA, VATICAN

has so well said: Art has made them our contemporaries. Who does not at once recognise the curly-headed Marcus Aurelius with his lifted brow and projecting eyes? Are there any modern portraits more familiar than the severe, wedge-like head of Augustus with his sharp-cut lips and nose, or the brutal bull-head of Caracalla, or the bestial, bloated features of Vitellius?

The prevailing impression of the lords of Rome is of undeniable strength, of developed character in good and in evil.

So also the empresses in their elaborate coiffures have all the haunting familiarity of faces often seen in the social life of to-day. The dignified seated statue of Agrippina the elder, daughter of Julia and Agrippa, granddaughter of Augustus, and wife of Germanicus, who, like her mother died of starvation in exile, is pre-eminent above all the rest, as was her character in its ideal nobility.

Very different is the face of her unworthy daughter Agrippina the younger, wife of Claudius, who was murdered by her son Nero. A greedy, dissolute, scornful face which repeated its characteristics in her son, and yet with a certain imperious ability, an incontest-

ably regal air which makes us wish that we might read:

> "Stern Agrippina's diary and life
> Writ by herself recording all her thoughts,
> Deeds, passions, all the doings of old Rome."

What a wonderful art is this of the sculptor which, so many centuries after the originals have shrivelled to soft white ash, brings before us every dimple of cheek and curve of throat, even the spoiled-child-like pout of the vain and foolish Sabina; the subtle trick of the flickering smile on the small mobile mouth of poor Poppæa, than whom:

> "None fairer strayed into the world
> Or wandered with more witchery through the air."

How unmistakably it declares the sweet purity of Lucilla and the lurid fascination of the unscrupulous voluptuous Messalina,—and how it piques our curiosity as it depicts the enigmatical rapt gaze of the younger Faustina, whose heavy-lidded eyes look over and beyond us at who knows what melancholy vision, but which keep their secret with such proud impassivity.

How those reproductions of their very

selves illuminate and sometimes contradict the annalists who profess to have given us the stories of their lives. It is impossible, one of the most accurate of the historians tells us, at this day to be perfectly just, when even in their lifetime public opinion was inconceivably partisan. In every case after the reigning emperor pronounced his wish his courtiers and scandal-mongers vied with each other to malign and vilify any hated woman, and the official court annalists gathered the lying scandals to furnish material from which later historians handed down the memory of the unfortunate to possibly undeserved infamy. There was doubtless much that might have been said for these maligned ladies, could any champion have been found to take down the testimony of the defendant.

A study of the historical facts in the case of Julia, daughter of Augustus, shows that quite a different construction can be put upon them from that hitherto accepted.

Julia, says Ferrero, was certainly not the miserable Bacchante of the scandalous Roman chronicle,—and again everything becomes clear enough if one sees in the ruin of Julia a kind of terrible political and judicial blackmailing.

Unfortunately her guilt or innocence hangs in the balance with that of Livia. If the events which we are to follow in the second chapter of this volume, were the playing out to its conclusion of a tragedy composed by Livia, she was many times a murderess. Such one half of Rome, the half who loved Julia, considered her. It is the solution of the problem which I have assumed, giving Livia at the same time the benefit of the doubt, since authorities agree that it cannot now be determined just how far the course of events assisted her ambition and how far her crimes assisted the course of events. One fact is evident that historians during the reigns of Augustus and of Tiberius to justify their sternness to Julia would vilify her reputation and protect that of Livia.

The poets of the Augustan Age are not negligible in the briefest review of this period of wonderful achievement and Virgil, Horace, Tibullus, and Ovid are presented in these earlier chapters with a conscientious seeking for exactitude. Above all, I have sought to portray truthfully the sense of the coming of Christ which brooded so mysteriously and powerfully over the pagan world that Virgil was accounted his prophet, and in the early

legends of the Church St. Paul is said, as he journeyed to Rome, to have paused at his grave and to have exclaimed: "What a man I could have made of you if I had not come too late!"

Of the heroines of the other chapters, the character of Sulpicia, the only Roman poetess whose work has come down to us is drawn as consistently as possible from her poems, and those of Tibullus, if we admit, as seems perfectly possible, that she was the Delia of his verse.

In the Villa of Unhappy Love a glimpse is given of the *ignis fatuus* Berenice, who followed Titus from Jerusalem and vanished like a falling star.

Her story is connected with that of the Vestal Cornelia by the atrocious Domitian, who condemned the innocent woman to be buried alive, and also by the loving mediation of the Chrstian Princess Flavia Domitilla.

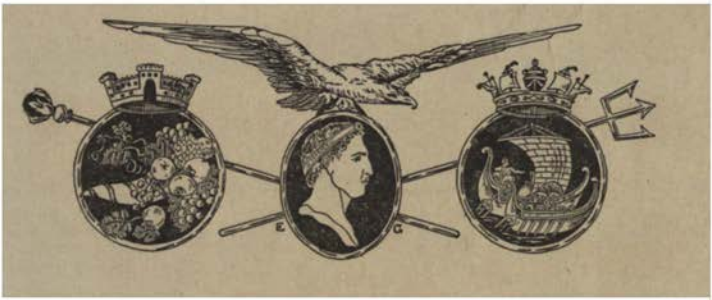
The British Princess Morna, it must be confessed, is a phantom from the "Ivory Gate," a delusive dream having no corresponding prototype, but the dramatis personæ among which she moves are "authentic spectres," and the stage-setting is that given us by archæology.

In the Necklace of Vesta we find half of Rome Christian, the old religion dethroned is dying hard and the Goths under Alaric swoop down to give the death-blow in the Sack of Rome. Galla Placidia is possibly the most attractive of all the empresses, and the story of the love of the noble Goth Ataulph, one of the sweetest of romances, contrasting sharply with that of Attila and Placidia's wild daughter Honoria.

The Flight of Apollo takes us back for a brief glance at Agrippina, Poppæa, and Faustina, the latter probably as basely maligned as Julia, and thus with many an unpardonable omission we have paced through the portrait gallery of the empresses striving with a sympathetic imagination to guess at their lives:

"For of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,
Vivid as fire and jewelled thick with tears,
Some yet are good, if aught be good to save,
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave,
Was such not theirs the few I take, and give
Out of my life to make their dead lives live
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath
Between dead lips forgotten even of death?"

BUSTS OF THE EMPERORS AND EMPRESSES
Capitoline Museum



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CHAPTER I

SULPICIA

I

A POET'S VILLA

Prince, let us leave the din, the dust, the spite,
The gloom and glare of towns, the plague, the blight;
Amid the forest leaves and fountain spray
There is the mystic house of our delight,
And through the dim wood Dian threads her way.

ANDREW LANG, after Theodore de Banville.

NESTLING under vine-garlanded trellises the village of Gallicano straggles upward to-day toward the ruined city of Præneste, over the same pleasant slopes which, in the days of Augustus, witnessed the more stately procession of the pergolas of Pedum, the villa of the poet-knight Albius Tibullus.

It was not the young man's fault that the columns were broken, the frescoes faded, and the larger part of the once magnificent domain confiscated by the Emperor,—one of whose summer-palaces had recently been erected on the portion nearest the city.

The elder Tibullus had forfeited his estate through participation in the conspiracy of Brutus, but his son Albius had served bravely as an officer of cavalry in Gaul, and for this reason his birthplace and a modest farm had been preserved to him from the general wreck of his patrimony.

Returning from the long Gallic campaign he determined to abandon the career of arms and to devote himself in retirement to the gentler pursuit of poetry. As he approached his ancestral home, his heart swelling with the rush of old associations, he spied from the highway an ancient lichen-covered statue of Terminus, which during his boyhood had marked the boundary of the estate, and leaping from his horse he reverently kissed the rough-hewn pediment in which the limbs of the sylvan deity were sheathed.

As he did so he was startled by rippling laughter, and, parting the boughs of a thicket, two young girls and a youth, who had been

TEMPLE OF THE SIBYL AT TIVOLI

observing him with much amusement, appeared suddenly upon the scene.

"Do you not know that you are trespassing on the grounds of the Imperial Villa?" the elder girl asked, and Tibullus, as he scanned her bold but handsome features, knew that this was Julia, the daughter of Augustus.

"Pardon, Princess," he replied, "but this land was once my father's, and I could not resist the impulse to greet this old god, who shall now retreat from a station which he has no longer a right to occupy."

"How can he retreat since he is footless?" retorted Julia. "Let him rest where he is; but, since you have feet, come with us to the great chestnut tree yonder and help us open the burs, for my fingers are full of prickles."

Tibullus was about to excuse himself, when Julia's companion spoke eagerly. "If you are our neighbour you must be the Knight Albius Tibullus. Only last night my uncle, your general, Corvinus Messala, pointed out your beautiful old villa to us; and praised your valour. This is his son, Messalinus, and I am Sulpicia the daughter of Messala's sister Valeria. We are visiting the Princess Julia, whom you have already recognised, and you

surely will not refuse her request to aid us in our chestnut gathering?"

"No, not if you know what is good for yourself," added Messalinus. "The Princess is accustomed to having her invitations accepted as commands. She is very good company too, so tie your horse and come with us."

Tibullus obeyed, but he allowed Messalinus to lead the way with Julia, and challenged by Sulpicia to give his reason for burying himself as a hermit in this lonely spot, he spoke eloquently of the charms of a rural life.

"When you are in Rome again," he concluded, "ask my friend Horatius Flaccus what he thinks of Pedum, for we read Homer together here."

"He told us of that visit," Sulpicia replied, "and of the celebration of an old festival, the Lustration of the Fields, when your white-robed maidens and youths paced in solemn procession chanting a litany to Ceres and Faunus. Horace says that you and Virgil are the last of the poets who really believe in the old gods."

"Do you not believe in them?" Tibullus asked gravely.

"I suppose so," she replied indifferently, "but they appear to trouble themselves little

about me,—so I do not love them. Do you in reality love this stupid old Terminus who could not, or would not, guard your estate from usurpation?"

"Surely," he replied, "and even the mischievous fauns, but more the lovely naiads and dryads who make beautiful the portion still left to me, and most of all the muses who keep me from loneliness."

She smiled indulgently as though she were listening to the prattle of a child.

"I prefer the society of mortals," she replied lightly.

"Do you?" he asked. "Then you have been more fortunate than I."

Her eyes flashed indignation. "Egotist," they seemed to say, "do you fancy yourself the only enlightened person in the world?" But she answered gently, "I have indeed been fortunate, but you may be even more so. Come to Rome and we will show you many whose company you might learn to prefer to that of your hamadryads."

"Whom have you in Rome of whom you can make this boast?"

"We have Virgil," she answered—and he bowed low, for Virgil was the man of all others whom he reverenced most. She smiled tri-

umphantly, knowing that she had won her point.

Was it possible, he wondered, that she had more wit than he had credited to women, that he might in time learn to enjoy this girl's light chatter? It was quite enough for the present to look at her. Messalinus marked the thirst in his gaze, and though no poet, said afterward that Tibullus drank his cousin with his eyes.

Sulpicia's eyes were downcast, and her attention was presently attracted by hoof-prints in the moist earth which she pointed out to Tibullus.

"They are the tracks of a wild boar," he exclaimed. "Let me escort you both to your villa, and do not visit this spot until you hear from me. Fortunately night is the time that wild animals choose to approach so near to human habitations. I will return at dawn, and if successful, will send you the creature's head."

"Let me join you," exclaimed Messalinus, "I can bring with me two of the Emperor's Molossian hounds."

"Then take them around by the highway to the statue of Terminus," replied Tibullus. "I shall leave my huntsmen there to rouse the quarry from its feast on the chestnuts, while I

cut off its retreat here by fastening nets across the path, and so hold it at bay until you come up to give the death-blow."

Early the following morning as Tibullus was engaged in the dim light in placing the toils, he was startled by a cautious crackling of branches at a little distance and had almost hurled his spear when Sulpicia stood before him. She laughed softly.

"Did you take me for the boar?" she asked.

"Yes, Diana preserved you, for if she had not held my hand I might have killed you. Why did you come?"

"The Princess Julia wished to join the hunt and begged me to come too, for, if it were discovered that she had done so alone, the Emperor would be very angry. For some unknown reason he thinks that everything I do is right. If Julia were not so good-natured she would hate me, for he has set me up as a model for her."

"Where, then, is the Princess?"

"She has gone with my cousin to the rendezvous for the hounds, but I preferred to come to you. I wanted—to see you kill the boar," she added confusedly.

"It is no sight for a gentle girl," he replied displeased. "I would take you immediately

home were there time, but the boar will soon be roused and I shall be needed here. You will be safe in this tree, so have your way."

He crouched before her bidding her stand upon his shoulders, then rising to his full height enabled her to seat herself upon a branch which overhung the trail.

The sun had not yet risen; a mysterious dusk shrouded the forest and they spoke in whispers as he leaned upon his spear standing guard beneath her.

"This is very exciting," she said, "I never had such an adventure. Now surely we should hear the pipes of Pan, the laughter of the nymphs fleeing from the fauns, and, if Diana ever roams the woods, the cry of her hounds and the whir of the arrows from her silver bow."

He did not reply for her tone was one of light mockery and after a little silence she asked, "Is there any danger?"

"Not where you are sitting."

"Then come and sit beside me."

He laughed softly, "You forget that I am here to hold the boar at bay."

"But it may kill you."

"It is exactly that possibility which gives zest to the sport."

She shuddered and said faintly, "I am afraid."

"Of what, pray?"

"I do not know, I only know that I *am* afraid."

"I will protect you, dear lady; but do not speak, I hear a sound in the valley."

It came again, unmistakably the distant baying of the dogs, but Sulpicia at the same instant gave a little cry of simulated fear. "Oh! oh! There is something up there in the tree. I saw its eyes gleaming. It is a panther."

"Impossible, there are no panthers in Latium."

"Yes, yes, I see it plainly now. It is crouching, preparing to spring. I am faint —I shall fall."

He swung himself to the bough on which she was seated and with a whir of wings a great bird flew away.

"You see it was only an owl," he said and turned to descend, but she clung to him convulsively, then relaxed her hold and lay limp in his arms.

At the same instant the boar rushed past, snorting and struggling furiously as it entangled itself in the toils.

Tibullus shook the unconscious girl gently, and called on her eagerly to rouse herself; but she made no response.

The dogs came up, tearing their way noisily through the underbrush; and the boar, mad with fear, burst the net and was off like a tornado, its pursuers close upon its heels. As soon as the uproar had ceased Sulpicia revived,—but the nerveless arm which had lain so inert across his shoulder tightened itself about his neck, and she nestled more closely to his breast. "You are not killed!" she murmured; "I was afraid, not for myself but for you—" Then after a little pause, "But I have made you lose the boar. I am so sorry."

Tibullus strained her the closer to his wildly beating heart. "I do not care," he said, "I do not care."

For many months thereafter he saw her no more—for when he next sought the venerable Terminus he found it crowned with a chaplet of withered roses, but the summer-palace was vacant, the imperial household had returned to Rome.

He had fancied when far away in Gaul that the mere environment of his beloved home would give him happiness, but from the mo-

ment that Sulpicia awakening in his embrace had yielded her lips to his passionate kisses, an unquenchable flame had been lighted in his soul. He knew that he should love her while life should last; he believed that under favouring circumstances she might love him, but this confidence gave him no hope—an impoverished descendant of one of the most ancient families of the nobility of Latium, a knight whose bravery had brought him no advancement, an unknown poet, what madness for him to aspire to the hand of the niece of Messala, the victorious general and close friend of the Emperor.

Doubtless Sulpicia, though trapped into momentary forgetfulness of their several positions, realised them now, and the wreath was a farewell, or it would have been accompanied by some word of encouragement.

He threw himself into his literary work, seeking to find in it and in the conduct of his farm medicine for his pain. But his loftiest elegies were tinged with a very human yearning, as though a rose had been pressed between the leaves of a psalter, and had coloured the pure pages with its own heart's blood.

With all his love he had little conception

of Sulpicia's character. He remembered that she had spoken irreverently of the high gods. Was it possible that she was touched with the scepticism of the time? He had no suspicion that she possessed poetical genius, possibly greater than his own,—that in her intense way she was as deeply religious as himself,—that her fervid nature was crying out to the unanswering heavens for guidance and sympathy, —that she shared his unrest, and in the loneliness of an uncongenial crowd craved as he did comprehension and love.

But on one memorable morning a glimpse of the truth was revealed to him. He was pacing his garden in quiet contemplation. The vine branches cast flickering shadows on the uneven tesselated pavement, and the rhythmic throb of the fountain in the lily-padded pool beat time to the hexameters which pulsed as musically through his brain, when his meditations were interrupted by the arrival of a post from Rome bringing him three letters.

This was so unusual an event that Tibullus broke the seals with a slight flutter of excitement. The first was from Horace.[1]

"Albius," he wrote, "what are you doing

[1] See *Epistles*, Book I., 4.

hidden from the world by Pedum's green hedges?

"You were not in other days devoid of ambition. The gods have given you personal charm, health, friends, fame, and an unfailing purse.

"Encourage yourself with the thought that your days of hopes and fears, anxieties and regrets have passed, and the unforeseen hours are hastening to you freighted with glad surprise.

"When you are ready for amusement come to your friend Horatius; you will find him fat and flourishing, with a well-groomed hide, a very swine in the sty of Epicurus——"

Tibullus laid aside the letter with an indulgent smile.

"Nay, good friend," he said, "I thank you, but I shall not go to Rome. You are mistaken in your judgment of me. I am no child of Fortune. I have neither wealth, nor renown, nor love; mine is but the common lot, but I am content."

As he spoke he noticed the seal of the letter.

"Fortune's wheel!" he exclaimed; "perchance it is an omen that my fortune awaits me at Rome."

A second glance convinced him of his error.

The wheel was not Fortune's, for a griffin crouched with his paw upon it. Horace had sealed his letter with an engraved gem set in a ring given him by Mæcenas, a beautiful but ill-omened trinket, for the insignia which it bore was that of Nemesis, the jealous goddess, who in her car drawn by griffins rushes to wreak vengeance upon those whose happiness approaches that of the immortals.

"Nemesis," murmured Tibullus; "but why should she seek me out? In my obscurity I am at least safe from the envy of gods and men."

But as he rapidly read his second letter, surprise and gratification showed themselves in his mobile face. Messala wrote that Augustus had awarded his favourite general a "Triumph," in recognition of his successful campaign in Gaul. A poem would be read to the assembled multitude, and—here was the motive of his present writing—the choice of the poet had been left to Messala, and he had named Tibullus.

"Not without thee, my trusty knight," wrote the general, "did I win this great honour. Not without thee did I batter down those fortresses and beat the barbarians; nor will I accept my laurels from the hand of

THUSNELDA IN THE TRIUMPH OF GERMANICUS
From the painting by C. Piloty

Augustus unless he at the same time crown thee with the poet's bays. Sharer of my hardships, share also my renown."

"Shall I go?" Tibullus asked himself, tempted yet shrinking. "This third letter, if it bears upon the matter, shall decide."

Then the hot blood rushed to his cheek, for he read:

"My uncle bids you come, and, if she had any influence with you, so would—Sulpicia."

II

THE TRIUMPH

A sense of something coming on the world,
A crying of dead prophets from their tombs,
A singing of dead poets from their graves.
. . . . . .
A child that is to sit where I am sitting;—
And he shall charm and soothe, and breathe and bless,
The roaring of war shall cease upon the air,
Falling of tears and all the voices of sorrow,
And he shall take the terror from the grave,
And he shall still that old sob of the sea
And heal the unhappy fancies of the wind,
And turn the moon from all that hopeless quest;
Trees without care shall blossom and all the fields
Shall without labour unto harvest come.
A gentle sovereign. Ah, might there not be

Some power in gentleness we dream not of?
Gadias. A somewhat sudden change of policy,
It has not been our way.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS.

All Rome was out for the great holiday. Throughout its entire length the Sacred Way was garlanded and hung with brilliant tapestries. Every temple was open, and priests in full regalia were feeding the altar flames with incense. The populace in their gayest attire, wearing wreaths and waving branches of laurel, bordered the route of the procession, forming a parti-coloured frieze against the white beauty of the temple colonnades. Sulpicia, who sat with the family of Augustus in the pavilion which had been erected in the Forum as the Emperor's receiving stand, had watched for eight long hours the unrolling of the pompous pageant.

The parade had started at daybreak from the Campus Martius, entering the city by the Porta Triumphalis where it had been met and headed by the entire body of the Senate, arrayed in their white togas bordered with purple. After the Conscript Fathers had come the trumpeters, filling the air with fierce military music, the overture to the rare spectacle, whose first scene was a succession of floats on

which were erected models of the captured cities.

Narbonne, with a reproduction of the triumphal arch erected in honour of Augustus, Carcassonne with its huge walls breached by Roman battering-rams, Tarbes, with its background of Pyrenean ranges painted in panorama, the temple of Toulouse with its rifled treasure-tanks, and the towers of many a forgotten city of Aquitania, tottered by on their lumbering platforms. They were regarded with curiosity and hailed with occasional applause, which woke into wild enthusiasm as the cry "The spoils! the spoils!" announced the approach of jangling vans laden with plunder of every description. Cart-load after cart-load of arms stripped from the dead after the great battle of Atax, pikes and javelins, bows, arrows, and swords and stone-headed axes, hide-covered, nail-bossed shields, bucklers and helms, with the trappings of horses, and camp equipage clattered along the mighty paved way, amid the reiterated shouts of near and distant spectators which blended in one continuous roar. This applause was lulled into reverent silence by an interlude of flutes which prepared the beholders for the second scene in the drama, the procession of priests leading

the sacrificial victims,—white bulls with gilded horns, followed by votaries bearing the sacred effigies and the golden vessels of the sanctuaries.

Again the surge of human voices rose as the wild beasts peculiar to the conquered country were exhibited as in the parade of a modern circus. This feature of the spectacle had always been popular. Julius Cæsar had shown the people of Rome a herd of forty elephants, and Augustus, following his Egyptian campaign, had exhibited rhinoceroses and hippopotami. The fauna of Gaul furnished huge bears from the Pyrenees, stags and deer from Aquitania, and wolves and boars in cages from the vicinity of the Loire with equally powerful hunting dogs led in leash. After the wild animals were led the horses of the defeated foes, and litters followed heaped with their personal treasures: silver vessels filled with coins, necklaces of gems, crowns, chains, armlets, and collars of gold, with belts and baldrics, carved hunting horns, and robes of costly fur.

And now the cries of "Io triumphe!" were a veritable explosion as the captives, blond, long-tressed men of giant frame, whose golden collars testified to their high rank,

marched past with manacled arms, but with heads scornfully thrown back and eyes flashing defiance upon their captors. There were aged bards among them carrying their harps, white-bearded Druid priests, their hoary locks bound with holly and mistletoe, and even noble women whose hearts were furnaces of hate but who walked as haughtily as Thusnelda in the Triumph of Germanicus or Zenobia in that of Aurelian, and as Cleopatra would not walk, preferring death to such indignity.

Immediately following the captives the lictors bearing their fasces and dancing lute-players heralded the culminating feature of the pageant, the approach of the veterans, and the ivory quadriga on which, clad in purple and gold, and crowned with laurel, was enthroned the hero of the day. At Messala's side, guiding the four white horses harnessed abreast, stood the young laureate Albius Tibullus; and the colour rushed to Sulpicia's face as, handing the reins to an assisting charioteer, he approached the footstool of the Emperor and began to intone his Triumphal Ode.

The tumult in her heart distracted her attention from the utterances of the poet, but

there were certain stanzas which sung themselves into her brain, and long afterward she found herself repeating his description of the march of the victorious Romans:

With the force of the snow-swollen torrent
  Leaping down from the high Pyrenees,
Where Garonne's irresistible current
  Sweeps the plain on its way to the seas,
So our cohorts rushed down from the mountains
  That form the strong bulwarks of Spain,
And forded Dordogne, whose fair fountains
  Bedew Aquitaine.
But it was not for conquest or glory
  That we battered and breached the huge walls,
For our loved ones, for ancestors hoary,
  We clove those barbarian Gauls.
So we swept as did Cæsar's brave legions
  Like a tempest of hail and of rain.
They remembered our swords in those regions,
  And fled once again.

At this point the eyes of the poet had found hers and she heard no more, not even the peroration lauding her uncle's donation of his share of the spoils to the public weal:

Though no sports soil to-day the arena,
  Yet with treasure untold he has come,
And he paves the long Via Latina
  Which binds ancient Alba to Rome,

And the humblest Campanian peasant
Who from market plods home through the rain,
For this road which his worn feet find pleasant
Shall bless him again!

With the concluding words, the poet was at her side. The Emperor was asking where he should send the laureate's prize, but Tibullus did not hear. All his soul was centred on the revelation which had come to him in Sulpicia's rapt gaze. It was Messala who with monitory hand upon his arm replied, "Sire, let the poet find his prize at my house."

Tibullus bowed low. "I had not hoped for a prize," he stammered, "but I shall thank the gods all my life——"

The Emperor swept by him to take his seat by the side of Messala in the triumphal car and Tibullus with a glance at Sulpicia completed his sentence—"if only I find you."

The legions, who claimed Tibullus as their comrade-in-arms, closed in around him cheering, shouting, singing, and beating time upon their shields or clashing them against those of their neighbours like cymbals as they escorted their general and their poet to the temple of Jove upon the Capitoline Hill. Here Messala would lay his golden laurel wreath upon

the knees of the statue, and here the more distinguished personages were to partake of a banquet while all others would feast at the expense of Messala at tables spread in the Forum.

Valeria, the mother of Sulpicia, had felt herself exalted to the skies by the honours done her brother but she uttered an exclamation and turned pale as the quadriga passed. "See, see," she cried, "they have forgotten to fasten beneath the chariot the little bell and the scourge to protect it from Nemesis." Unseen but implacable she ever dogs the footsteps of those who call themselves supremely happy until she has punished them for their presumption.

"Fear not, my mother," Sulpicia replied. "My uncle still sighs for other lands to conquer. I doubt if there lives any mortal who is perfectly happy," but her heart told her that happiness for herself and Tibullus depended only upon her own resolution, and she besought the Fates to visit some minor misfortune upon him, that so the anger of the avenging goddess might be averted.

Sulpicia waited long in her uncle's palace and Messala came at last, accompanied by Tibullus and other friends—prominent among

whom was Virgil, who, unenvious of the younger poet's bays, had kissed his forehead at the conclusion of his declamation.

The Emperor's gift had arrived, a vase exquisitely carved in oriental lands from the costly, mysterious stone called murra, whose identity has not been established by antiquarians, but which may possibly have been jade.

Sulpicia presented the prize to the poet, who received it as he had the announcement of the gift, with little interest, striving to read again in the downcast eyes the message flashed to him from the Emperor's pavilion.

The company vociferated their admiration, and Pomponius Crassus, a wealthy connoisseur and collector of all beautiful objects, not excepting women, gazed enviously at the murrine vase, exclaiming, "By Hercules, it is worth a king's ransom, and I will give thee thy price if thou hast a mind to sell it."

Indignation flushed Sulpicia's face. "Pomponius has yet to learn," she said coldly, "that there are some things which cannot be bought." The rebuke had a double sting for it was well known that the aged voluptuary was a suitor for Sulpicia's hand, and favoured by the avaricious Valeria.

"What is not for sale is often given away," said Messala quickly to cover his friend's confusion, "and I have such a gift in mind for Tibullus. One of the fifteen guardians of the Sibylline prophecies is dying. The Emperor names his successor, and I shall crave the post for our poet."

Pomponius scowled, and his gross face grew still more repulsive. "A sinecure," he cried, "for though the office is sacerdotal you will be bound by no irksome vows, and may marry into the highest family, even that of the Emperor. You will have a villa at Tivoli by the side of the charming temple of the Sibyl and a house upon the Palatine near the temple of Apollo. Your duties will be nominal, simply to read over the prophecies and to give them whatever interpretation pleases you. Think of the opportunities for gain when authority is desired for questionable procedures. Your future is assured and you have my congratulations."

"I have no wish for a sinecure," Tibullus replied flushing, "nor have I qualifications to reap the benefits which you suggest. I would prefer some less brilliant place, where I could in reality serve my age."

"And you will find such an opportunity

in this post," said Virgil. "Many spurious auguries have crept in, many doubtful ones are now in popular circulation in Rome—brought back by the army from its last campaign in Syria. There is one oracle attributed to the Cumæan Sibyl which is of tremendous portent but which is not yet admitted to the authorised collection.

"It foretells the coming of a babe who shall reign as such a great king that from his birth the course of the world will begin anew. Augustus is anxious that all the prophecies should be thoroughly weighed and revised, and their signification announced. For this service you are peculiarly adapted, by deep reverence and genius. I beg of you to accept it for the time foretold is at hand."

An expression of awe shadowed the young man's face.

"Can mortal man be equal to such responsibilities?" he asked.

"Nay," replied Virgil, "but poets are inspired by the immortals. I myself have written verses not of my own imagining, which I have felt to be an influx from some deity."

"Dear Master," besought Sulpicia, "will you not recite for us the prophecy of Hero-

phile the Cumæan Sibyl." And Virgil, urged by all, repeated the remarkable lines which were regarded by the early Christian Church as prophetic of the coming of Christ[1]:

"So the last age of Cumæ's seer has come,
Again the great millennial æon dawns,
. . . and from high heaven descends
The first-born child of promise.
The age of iron in his time shall cease
And golden generations fill the world.
For the child's birth-right is the life of gods,
He rules a world his sire has blessed with peace.
For thee, fair child, the lavish earth shall spread
Thy earliest playthings, trailing ivy wreaths
And foxgloves red and cups of water-lilies
And wild acanthus leaves with sunshine stored.

"At last when stronger years have made the man,
The voyager will cease to vex the sea,
Nor ships of pine wood longer serve in traffic,
For every fruit shall grow in every land.
The field shall thrive unharrowed, vines unpruned,
And stalwart ploughmen leave their oxen free.
Come thou dear child of gods, Jove's mighty heir,
Begin thy high career: the hour is sounding;
See, in the dawning of a new creation
The heart of all things living throbs with joy!
Oh! if but life would bring me days enough
And breath not all too scant to sing thy deeds;

[1] ". . . Dies illa Teste David cum Sibylla."

THE SIBYLS—BY MICHAEL ANGELO
Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel

Not Thracian Orpheus should outdo the chant
Nor beautiful Apollo, lord of song." [1]

A silence fell upon the little company, broken at last by Tibullus, who, greatly moved, exclaimed:

"It may be that induction into the sacred office will in itself confer the needed insight. It is true that at certain moments of exaltation, when sacrificing according to the ritual for my household, I have felt myself uplifted and the gods very near. As a child, too, I heard mysterious voices, and my mother was convinced that they talked with me in the woods and that I was destined to great things. If this honour is conferred upon me I shall hold myself like the pipes of Pan open and responsive to the breathings of the gods."

"And in the meantime," exclaimed Messala joyously, "you shall remain here. If you require occupation you shall teach my niece Sulpicia. She also writes poems. I caught her in the act one day and captured the manuscript. It was a description of a boar-hunt, not bad for a girl who had never seen one, mingled with romantic nonsense about an ideal lover, Cerinthus, saved from the death of

[1] Translated by R. S. Conway and Miss F. E. Berar.

Adonis by her own blandishments. All purely imaginary she assures me. Our friend Virgil declares that a girl with such fictional ability combined with her trick of rhyming needs teaching alone to become a second Sapho."

Messalinus gave a low whistle and regarded Tibullus with a peculiarly knowing look. He in turn scanned Sulpicia's flaming face transported by this confirmation of his hopes. "To write one should first have read much," he said, schooling his voice to a calmness he was far from possessing. "Who is your master in this fascinating art?"

The others had turned aside and her answer was so low that only Tibullus heard.

"My master is Love and the only poems that I read are yours."

III

NEMESIS MENACES

If love requited gives thee happiness
  And fills with music sweet the silent night,—
Beware the joyous smile and soft caress.
  Lurking behind that semblance of delight,
Nemesis croucheth. Surely soon or late
She wreaks her vengeance on the fortunate.

FRÈRE CHAMPNEY.

THE SIBYLS—BY MICHAEL ANGELO
Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel

Charmed days now dawned for Tibullus in the palace upon the Palatine, and the joy in his heart as he found his love returned sang itself incessantly in melodious lays, which have outlived the centuries and tell us to-day the story of his love.

Only one of these is frankly addressed to Sulpicia. It is more playful than the rest, questioning whether she was more beautiful as he first saw her in the villa garden, dressed in simple white with wind-blown hair, or as she sat in the Emperor's box on the day of her uncle's triumph, royally robed in purple, her delicate head well-nigh crushed by the elaborate tower-like coiffure of golden braids coiled one upon another.

Even such light compliment as this was not acceptable to Sulpicia's mother, the ambitious Valeria, who as we know had fixed upon the wealthy Pomponius Crassus as her desired son-in-law, and of her opposition to his suit Tibullus was quickly informed.

But when the book-sellers clamoured for his verse he found that he could write upon but one theme, and he chose for his beloved the pseudonym Delia and continued to pour forth his love with increasing intensity of feeling.

Sulpicia also, while rebelling against concealment, recognised its necessity until the preferment promised her lover should give him prestige in her mother's eyes.

The first of her poems in the correspondence strikes a key-note of deep seriousness. Upon the festival of the Matronalia when young girls reaching womanly estate were accustomed to beseech the great mother-goddess for the husband of their choice, Valeria had taken her daughter to the temple and had dictated a prayer that Juno would bless her marriage with Crassus. But Sulpicia was silent, while in her heart she repeated her true prayer:

My heart's desire by coward lips unspoken
Great goddess hear, as from thy altar fire
The smoke ascends whose soaring wreaths betoken
  My heart's desire.
To honour thee I 've donned my best attire,
And bring thy cakes upon a salver oaken.
Thou, who hast loved, vouchsafe the aid invoken,
Let not the vows which love has made be broken
But grant when next thy festal flames aspire
By wedded lips all unabashed be spoken
  My heart's desire.

So the days drifted by filled to the brim for each with happiness, in spite of the little

subterfuges to which they were compelled to resort to foil the suspicions of a designing mother.

The gate which Tibullus addresses in one of his poems, half-hidden by an abutment, opened at the foot of the Palatine upon a narrow staircase leading to the spinning and weaving rooms in the outbuildings of the palace. This work was presided over by Sulpicia's aged nurse, who was dotingly devoted to her service, and suddenly Sulpicia developed a great interest in the housewifely crafts, and especially in filling her marriage-chest with linen of her own weaving.

Often the work was kept up until late at night, and the nurse would rehearse some old legend in droning tones which would lull the tired weavers until their heads drooped and they slept at their looms. All but Sulpicia, who with ear pricked listened for a whistle in the street below and loosing her noisy sandals sped down the winding stair to unbolt the gate for her lover. Then, if a step were heard in the court which separated the weaving rooms from the palace, the watchful nurse wakened the maidens and the clatter of the looms brought Sulpicia to her place again and Tibullus slipped into the street.

Long afterward, tortured in mind and body, and, as he believed, dying, Tibullus refers to those stolen meetings as the happiest moments of his life.

For such an intense nature as Sulpicia's the path of true love could not always run smooth. Jealousy was the black drop in her blood, and there came a day when even the perfect loyalty of her lover was not proof against its poison.

She loved him utterly, and demanded the same devotion on his part, and Tibullus, knowing the singleness of his own love as well as of hers, asked himself one evening if the immortal gods themselves could be happier than he, and with that question Nemesis came.

He would never forget the place or the hour. All of Rome that loved a lover was agog as to the identity of the woman who could inspire such devotion as was expressed in the poems to Delia, and Horace had made a wager that he would not only discover the mysterious lady, but would make Tibullus confess her name at a revel of wine and roses. Unconscious of the pitfall prepared for him Tibullus had at last consented to attend a banquet given by his friend in his honour—to which were invited not only the most distinguished men of Rome, but many of the

beautiful women whom the gay amourist has celebrated in his odes. Next to Tibullus his host had seated the most fascinating of them all, the Thracian dancer Glycera, with whose "pretty, pert, provoking ways and face too fatal-fair to see," Horace was for the moment in love.

She had but lately appeared in Rome, and her grace and beauty had captured the city; no entertainment of any pretension was complete without her appearance and the enormous sums commanded by her dancing gave colour to her pretensions that her life of elegance was honestly earned. No accepted lover had as yet been discovered—even Horace lamented her hardness of heart; but gossip could not credit her apparent virtue and hinted a mysterious patron in the background.

Tibullus started and frowned slightly when presented to her, and yet he could not have said that he had ever seen a more regal woman. Sulpicia herself in her pure blond beauty paled before this dazzling creature. Even so, he thought, Phryne must have looked when Praxiteles chose her as model for his Aphrodite.

The dead black of her hair contrasted with the wonderful whiteness of her perfect form, which was further intensified by shadows of

peacock blue and green cast by the filmy spangled robe, whose diaphanous texture tinged but did not conceal its lovely contours. Pendent sapphires falling from an Egyptian gorget slipped and sparkled and played hide-and-seek beneath its folds, which were caught by a belt of corroded copper, bossed with malachite.

Reading disapproval in the face of Tibullus the girl flushed painfully and drew a gauzy scarf across her breast, her eyes falling in what seemed to the observers a clever pretence of maidenly modesty. Only Horace who sat nearest overheard Tibullus say to the girl, "I had not counted on meeting you again in Rome. You promised to return to your home."

"I could not," she replied.

"Could not? I provided you with the means."

"I could not," she insisted. "*You* were here."

Horace laughed gaily. "You have met before?" he asked. Tibullus was silent but Pomponius Crassus, who watched him from across the table, replied with a malicious sneer, "And I could tell where and when if so I chose."

"None shall tell his friend's secrets here," cried Horace quickly, "but each shall confess his own. Let the toast be, Our True Loves, and as the cup goes round each must name his lady. I set the example—and drink to Glycera for whose love I vainly burn."

Acclamations and merriment greeted each declaration. The turn of Tibullus came last, and Horace challenging him to give the true name of Delia the company cried in unison, "Delia! Delia!" and eagerly invited the revelation of the identity of the heroine of the poems which had made their author famous.

"What, silent, Albius?" cried the host; "your taste was ever correct, so there can be no cause to blush for the lady. We guess her name already, shall I announce it for you?"

"Quick, quick," whispered Glycera, throwing her arm about the neck of Tibullus; "if you would not have her name bandied about by men like these, say—that I am Delia."

She had gradually raised her voice and those near catching the last words shouted, "Glycera is Delia; Glycera is Delia!" drowning the protestations of the poet in congratulations and applause.

Even Horace concealed his vexation under

gay banter. "We are rivals it seems," he said to Tibullus. "See, she wears my ring, an ill-omened thing for it bears the insignia of a goddess who will not tolerate human happiness. Show it to him, Glycera, and let him take warning, and meantime sing us that old Greek song, 'If love requited gives thee happiness.'"

Glycera placed her hand on that of Tibullus under pretence of allowing him to examine the ring, and while her voice thrilled with the weird music, half menace, half broken-hearted wail, he studied the signet, and with a vague sensation of impending evil recognised the device with which Horace had sealed the letter inviting him to Rome—the griffin-sped wheel of Nemesis.

Pomponius Crassus left the banquet at this juncture and ordered his litter-bearers to convey him with all speed to the house of Messala. He had not prospered in his wooing of Sulpicia. Only the day before this as he pressed his suit she had admitted that she loved another, and though she would not name his rival he believed that it was Tibullus. What he had just heard revived his hopes and he lost no time in reporting the scene to Sulpicia.

hood. Therefore nothing but the direst distress shall deprive me of this prized possession.' But two days later I saw in the shop of a vendor of precious objects a beautiful Greek slave, whom the dealer, a Babylonish Jew, was showing to Pomponius Crassus. As he regarded her with covetous lustful eyes a shudder ran through her frame and her glance fell upon me. 'Buy me,' she whispered, when the attention of Pomponius was averted, 'buy me, save me from him, or I shall kill myself.' Pomponius turned at that instant. 'Ah! it is you, Tibullus,' he cried. 'You would not gratify my desire to possess your vase the other evening, though I offered you all the money which I can spare just at this time for such luxuries. Here is something for the same price, a statue of the Lady of Cyprus, is she not? I shall strive to console myself with her, and yet if I could at this moment have your vase of oriental murra, I would gladly choose it instead.'

"'Then wait,' I cried, 'and you shall have your wish,' and in a few moments the vase was in his hands. Long he sat deliberating, while the girl covered her face with her arm and trembled. At last he sighed, 'I would that I could afford both,' and counted me out the

coins. 'I take it you will buy the girl,—but how and where can you keep her?'

"'I buy her,' I replied, 'but I desire you to witness her legal manumission. From this moment she is free'—and I gave her money also to return to her own country. I challenge Pomponius to deny what I have said."

"I have no wish to deny the facts," the latter replied with a shrug. "Tibullus admits my charges, believe his incredible magnanimity if you can. That he set his slave free only proves the extent of his infatuation. The fact remains that she did *not* leave Rome. Is it hard to guess the reason?"

"She remained, indeed," Tibullus answered, "but has supported herself by singing and dancing. She has been besought by many a wealthy man but it seems has chosen a poor but distinguished lover, the poet Horatius Flaccus, who will witness to what I say."

Valeria's face was inscrutable; Tibullus had spoken the simple truth, and in her heart she believed him. But her determination that her daughter should marry Pomponius was unaltered. She glanced reassuringly at her desired son-in-law and he left them, remarking nonchalantly that since Tibullus could have

nothing more to bring forward it was useless to waste time with him.

"Trust to me," Valeria said deceitfully as she also took her leave. "I will intercede for you with Sulpicia, and bring you her answer."

How she kept her promise we may infer from the verses fired by wounded pride whose presence among the papers of Tibullus have puzzled the critics for nearly two thousand years.

Sulpicia to Tibullus

Your trust in my love is strangely secure,
You believe that I 'm credulous, know that I 'm pure,
But when you deem I can only be true,
That nothing can weaken my firm faith in you,—
  You 're too sure,—far too sure.
Love comes and love goes, for this he has wings,
Ours has flown, and this is the sole thought that stings,
That I who forgot your low station and place,
Who come from an ancient and honourable race,
  A race of old kings,
Must smother my pride and meekly endure
A shameful, degrading, yet boasted amour.—
When you think (though besought by the noble) that I
Will go halves for your love with this wretch from the sty,—
  You 're too sure, far too sure.

IV

NEMESIS COMES

Leave to the Greek his marble nymphs
And scrolls of wordy lore:
Thine Roman is the pilum,
Roman the sword is thine;
The even trench, the bristling mound,
The legion's ordered line.
MACAULAY, *The Prophecy of Capys.*

Sulpicia's insulting and unmerited words had fallen like burning scoriæ upon the sensitive heart of Tibullus, but when he presently learned that she was dangerously ill all his indignation vanished and there came to him at the same time by sudden intuition the conviction that Valeria had played him false. "I must trust to no go-between," he told himself, "but hear Sulpicia's verdict from her own lips."

Every avenue of approach was closed and he could only besiege the temples of the gods for her recovery. It seemed that prayers offered in such absolute faith could not fail of an answer and one evening as he walked alone upon the terrace he saw her coming toward him. She was robed in white, and looked so wan and fragile that at first he

thought her a ghost and knelt reverently as she approached.

She bent over him, her eyes searching his very soul. "You love me still!" she cried.

"I have always loved you," and at that answer she took refuge in his arms sobbing like a grieved child.

So they sat in the gathering twilight, her arms about his neck, her cheek against his, and as he felt how faint was the beating of her heart he reproached himself that love for him had caused her such suffering.

"They plan to take me to my uncle's villa to-morrow," she murmured. "The physicians said yesterday that the crisis was passed and I must go away from Rome for my convalescence. They think it was the fever that was killing me."

"I, too, have a villa," he replied joyfully. "You shall grow well and strong at Pedum, far from the poison of the city."

She shook her head with a wilful smile but he continued with gentle insistence. "This very night I will ask your uncle for your hand, for I met him but an hour since—as he was leaving the palace of the Emperor. 'Come to my library at the lamp-lighting,' he said, 'for I have great news for you.'"

"Augustus has interceded for us. It is the post of which Virgil spoke!" she exclaimed, "and we owe it to Julia, who alone knows my secret. She told her father I was dying of love; and he came to see me, and said so kindly, 'You will not die, Sulpicia. See, I have brought you a wedding gift. It is the appointment as guardian and interpreter of the Sibylline leaves.' 'Of whom?' I asked. 'Of whom you please,' he answered. 'I have left blank the line in which you are to write his name—above the words, "husband of Sulpicia."' Then it was that the fever left me, and they told me that I would recover; but I was not sure. I only knew that I must see you, then I should know."

She nestled closer and sighed contentedly. "Do you remember Love, the white villa near the temple of the Sibyl at Tivoli? It is there you must listen to the voices; there, constantly refreshed by the spray from the great waterfall, our souls will expand like lilies in some quiet lake."

"Even so beloved," he replied:

"Let me lose wealth and fame and all men prize,
Only be near me at my parting breath
And through the gateway of thy loving eyes
My soul shall walk all unafraid to death."

But the implacable goddess Nemesis could not brook such happiness, and Tibullus was aghast as Messala unfolded his schemes of far-reaching ambition. It was no peaceful career, half sacerdotal and half literary, which was now offered him, but a strenuous military campaign leading as his patron believed through many dangers to glory and to immense wealth.

Messala had been created Proconsul of Asia, and he insisted that Tibullus should accompany him at once to the Orient as his next in command.

"You shall be Prefect," he said, "of the richest of its provinces, and shall be laden with spoils when we return. Only aid me now in the difficulties of administration as you aided me in conquest in Gaul. Why do you hesitate? Is it from lack of friendship or lack of ambition?"

Tibullus stammered forth the true reason, his love for Sulpicia, and Messala heard him indulgently. "I had thought of her as the future wife of my son," he said, "but the maid shall decide. Wealth and high position will not hurt your chances in the eyes of my sister Valeria; let that matter wait until our return. If Sulpicia loves you she will not stand in the way of your advancement, and

you can both bear temporary separation for the sake of your career."

But the ordeal presented to the lovers in the fervour of their reconciliation was too great for them to endure unassisted, and with characteristic piety Tibullus left the decisive word to the gods. Hurrying to Præneste he consulted the famous sortes at the temple of Fortune. He was in a sense the child of this goddess, for he had been cradled within view of her magnificent temple.

A blindfolded youth, whose office it was, drew from a vase three of the tablets inscribed with quotations from the writings of Virgil, which were implicitly believed by the devout to augur the success or disaster of any undertaking.

The first tablet drawn for Tibullus bore the mandate taken from the eighth book of the Æneid:

> Go thou, whom Destiny favours,
> Both in thy years and thy race;
> Go thou who art summoned by Heaven.

He bowed submissively. "Will the expedition be successful?" he asked; and the youth handed him a second tablet bearing the inscription:

Watching thee from the sky stands Actian Apollo
Bending his bow, and in terror of him all the Indies and Egypt,
All the Arabian host are in flight, and all the Sabæans.

But even this assurance of victory was not enough, and Tibullus asked, "Shall I return to my beloved?" And again the fateful lottery gave its misleading promise:

Saved from that storm of war and borne o'er vast reaches of water,
Enjoy thy quiet abode, with the gods of thy hearth and thy true love.
Death shall be powerless to claim thee till from the home of thy fathers,
Through the loved eyes of thy Delia joyous thou 'lt pass to Elysium.

The last lines were not Virgil's nor was the drawing left to chance, for Valeria, knowing that Tibullus had gone to consult the oracle, had suborned the priest in charge.

The resemblance to his own latest verse aroused no suspicion in the credulous mind of Tibullus. On the contrary, it seemed to him an evidence of divine omniscience, and a great calm settled upon his soul, every hesitation drowned in an ocean of faith.

But Sulpicia had not the same implicit trust or the same habit of unquestioning obedience. Her heart cried out for a deity who could be touched with compassion for human suffering, —for a mother-goddess more sympathetic than Juno, who would give her the love denied her by her earthly mother.

Such a goddess had recently built up a great cult in Rome. Isis, the Egyptian patroness of sailors upon the sea and all women in anguish of mind and body, the Great Mother who had passed through the agony of seeing her beloved Osiris killed by Typhon, god of evil, and had triumphantly witnessed his resurrection, was the prototype of the Mater Dolorosa, who has held the same place in the Roman Catholic Church for centuries, and who still rivals her divine son in the petitions of suffering humanity.

It chanced that the season of spring was at hand when the great festival of the opening of navigation was celebrated by the devotees of Isis, who launched a small ship in her honour laden with the votive offerings of the suppliants. A vast procession wound its way to the Tiber escorting the sacred ship to the accompaniment of the sweetest instrumental music and a chanted litany.

Sulpicia, clad in white and closely veiled, bore a lighted lamp garlanded with flowers which represented her lover. She would place the lamp upon the symbolic ship and watch the flame as the river bore it away. If it was not extinguished, but burned steadily until the ship was lost to sight, the omen for his voyage was favourable.

At her side walked or rather danced a Bacchante-like creature agitating wildly a bronze sistrum or sacred rattle. The girl carried also two doves in a cage. She was under the stress of strong emotion, and tears streamed from her eyes as she leapt and whirled. At a prearranged signal this young votary joined with Sulpicia in singing the prayer to the All-Pitiful Mother:

Isis, Mother Isis,
  We women cry to thee,
Thou hast felt each crisis
  Of woman's agony;
Thou hast held Osiris
  All mangled on thy knees.
Thou knowest well how dire is
  The danger of the seas.

Isis, Regina Maris,
  I lift my heart to thee,
When one I love afar is

Upon the cruel sea,—
When I list unsleeping
To beating of the rain
And pray with bitter weeping,
O bring my love again,—

Mater Dolorosa
Of those who love and part,
Who holdest them the closer
Unto thy pitying heart,
O hold my lover faithful
And safe upon the sea,—
Disperse the tempests fateful
And bring him back to me.

Arrived at the shore all knelt and repeated the solemn litany, while the priests laded and launched the mimic ship.

In utter silence the great throng watched it as the gentle breeze filled its sails and the current swept it on its course. Like a star of happy presage the light of Sulpicia's lamp shone clearly until the ship rounded a point and was lost to sight. Then the priest sprinkled the kneeling worshippers and repeated a benediction. Calmed and comforted the two women rose and regarded one another with sympathy. The bonds of a common experience of love, trouble, and religious exaltation united them. There was a yearning look

in the wild eyes of the gipsy-like girl at her side which appealed irresistibly to Sulpicia, and she extended her hand to her. The girl kissed it gratefully.

"You also have a lover who is going away?" Sulpicia asked.

"Yes," the girl replied, "but I am happy now, for Isis approves my project, and I shall go too. Did you not see how I placed the cage with one turtle-dove on the ship, and when it was well under way loosed the other which I had held in my bosom—and that she joined her mate? She joined her mate as I shall mine. He is a soldier and he sails on a troop-ship, in which Messala permits no women; but I shall disguise myself as a boy and hide until we are far out at sea."

"But after that you will surely be discovered, and put on shore," said Sulpicia.

"No fear of that," replied the girl, "for my lover is Messala's friend, and he will find means to keep me, for Isis has promised. In my own land I am a chieftain's daughter; we shall be wedded in Greece and never return."

A sudden fear clutched at Sulpicia's heart. "Who are you?" she asked, "and who is your lover?"

"They call me Glycera the Dancer," the

girl replied, "but I will tell you a secret. I am Delia, and my lover is the poet Tibullus."

Dazed, half-demented, Sulpicia knew not how she found her way home.

She had borne so much, but the limit of endurance had come at last. She had loved Albius with all the intensity of her soul and had accepted his incredible defence of the charges made by Pomponius Crassus. It mattered not, she told herself, if only he loved this base slave no longer. But here was the rival who aspired to become his wife. Here was duplicity and treachery on the part of Tibullus. He was false, false to the core. Should she call him to her and confront him with his villany? No, for he would lie again and justify himself as once before, and she, too glad to be beguiled, would believe him. But if the girl had lied—? Was there any certain way of arriving at the truth? Yes, one test remained infallible and she would risk all upon it. Albius had asserted that she, Sulpicia, should be his oracle—he would go or stay at her bidding. She would bid him give up this journey and all that it meant for her sake. And thus she wrote him, with no hint of her discovery:

"Beloved, Isis promises joy and love for

those who sacrifice all for love. My heart is breaking at the thought of separation from you. Love is not love which cannot endure any privation for the sake of the beloved. Therefore I say—if you love me, stay."

This letter Sulpicia's messenger submitted to Valeria, who saw that its meaning could be made to serve her purpose by the alteration of one word. Unquestioningly Tibullus obeyed the command, "If you love me, *go.*" His attempt to bid Sulpicia farewell was frustrated by Valeria, nor was a letter written Sulpicia from Ostia ever received. She learned from others that he had gone, and believed herself scorned and deserted by the lover who had nerved himself to the parting with the conviction that he was complying with her wishes.

Not until the ship had rounded Sicily, did Glycera discover herself to Tibullus. He had been pacing the deck with Messala late that evening, and had told his chief of the omens for a propitious voyage granted him by the goddess Fortune.

"You were ever Fortune's favourite," Messala replied; but there was a new and suspicious note in his voice, as he added: "Examine well your heart, ask yourself if you

deserve fortune, for if you do not it will dissolve like broken bubbles."

"Ah! that is what I fear," Tibullus replied. "When I think of Sulpicia I cannot believe my blessedness, for what man could deserve her love."

At that instant a song thrilled through the silence, wondrously sweet and clear.

Messala started, "That is a woman's voice," he said, "and yet there should be no woman on board the vessel. Are we, think you, among the sirens?"

They held their breath and the words startled Tibullus for they were those of the song which Glycera had sung at the banquet given by Horace, and now as then they seemed to him a premonition of disaster.

"I will probe this mystery," said Messala, as he strode away. There was no one on deck but the helmsman and a curly-headed cabin-boy who sat at his side gazing at the ship's wake, and the general, sorely puzzled, retired to his cabin.

He had scarcely gone below when the words rang out again:

"Great Jove who doth o'erweening pride abase
Unto each mortal metes this certain fate,

That when he deems himself most fortunate
Nemesis cometh at her swiftest pace."

It was unmistakably the cabin-boy, and he came forward as he sang.

"Is it indeed you, Nemesis?" Albius exclaimed.

"It is I indeed," laughed Glycera, as she strove to twine her arms around the young man's neck. He held her hands firmly and asked with sternness the meaning of her prank.

"It means that I love you, that I could not let you go without me."

Indignant at her effrontery, Tibullus chided her bitterly and the girl sought a woman's refuge in tears.

"I loved you," she reiterated, "I love you."

"But you had no right to do so, you who knew that I am another's."

"Did you not bid me return to Greece?" she pleaded.

"True, but not with me. I shall disclose your presence to Messala, and demand that you be put on shore at the first port."

The girl turned silently away, and Tibullus, repenting of his harshness, called her back. "You must understand," he said kindly, "that you place me in a false and intolerable posi-

tion. How could you imagine that I would not be displeased?"

"And my position?" she asked, "what will you tell Messala?"

"That you were homesick for Greece," he replied. "That will be a sufficient excuse, no one shall know your secret from me."

She threw herself at his feet, begging him to allow her to attend him as his slave, but he was inflexible, and Glycera, repudiating his explanation of her motives, avowed frankly to Messala that love alone had impelled her to follow Tibullus.

"You shall leave the ship at Corcyra," Messala said to Glycera, "and you, Albius, I count not altogether blameless, for I have heard from Valeria how you purchased this slave, and I wonder that Sulpicia so easily forgave you. Nay, protest not, for I have known many another good man bewitched by such a sorceress."

"A sorceress indeed," Glycera muttered as the two men walked away. "Ah! they do not know that I have the power to chain him to me past all release." She drew a small phial from her bosom. "I had not thought to use it," she cried to herself, "for the witch who sold it to me told me that I must give it to my lover only when all

womanly arts failed. It is a potion of such power that an overdose would kill. Ten drops, neither more nor less, in any drink and he will be wholly mine. It is odourless, colourless, tasteless. I will pour it into the flask of water which I place beside his pillow, and in the morning I can defy the world."

But when the morning dawned Tibullus, from whose face all intelligence had fled, lay plucking at his coverlet, uttering meaningless words.

"It is the plague," said the mistaken physician; "for the safety of all on board he must be put on shore. I can do nothing for him. When the disease strikes like that death is certain."

And so they bore him to die in a lonely hut at Corcyra, Glycera following and gaining credit in Messala's eyes for her devotion. With his first despatches to Rome he sent the news to Sulpicia. "Perchance she will mourn less if she knows that her lover was unfaithful," he reflected, and with kindly intentioned cruelty he wrote, "Grieve not that Tibullus is dead. You have been spared a living death. He never loved you, but on this voyage brought with him his slave of whom Pomponius Crassus told you. Summon your pride to your

aid; forget one whom the gods have justly punished."

Messala had not been far wrong when, shocked by the death-struck face of Tibullus, he counted him as no longer among the living. For many days and nights delirium lasted, and when it passed Tibullus was so spent that he believed himself dying. But the flame of his genius shot up clear and bright as he dictated two farewell letters, and with these his true life closed, for with one exception all his after poems are as smouldering embers to the pure fire of those that precede them.

Tibullus had gold and the letter to his commander was despatched by a messenger to Asia, and Messala's eyes moistened with sorrow as he read—

While you, Messala, plough the joyous main
And found on Eastern shores an empire vast—
Like flotsam on this Grecian island cast
I breathe my last in loneliness and pain.
Perfidious Fortune thrice implored in vain
With Isis promised joy for perils past,
A cloudless love which evermore should last—
And I shall find it—on Elysium's plain.

There fragrant Cassia perfumes every breeze,
There roses bloom and birds delirious sing,
While faithful lovers there by Venus led

Fondly embracing walk beneath the trees.
There I shall wait till Venus Delia bring—
Let this be said of me when I am dead.

Even Sulpicia's heart might have melted had not Glycera kept back the second letter.

My Darling, wear thy purple robes unrent,
Weep not for me nor tear thy amber hair—
I could not brook in Heaven thy despair.
Bid thy good nurse, when thou with grief art spent,
Repeat from Homer's legend eloquent
Penelope's high constancy so rare,
Till drooping like her o'er thy weaving there
Thou 'lt slumber and dreams bring thee sweet content.

But if my ghost indeed to thee might wend,
And from thy casement, which o'erlooks the street,
As in the blissful nights of long ago,
My sweet could hear my signal and descend
The secret stair with naked noiseless feet—
I 'd give my Heaven above for that below!

The immediate effects of the drug administered to Tibullus were exhausted, but it was none the less a slow poison. Death was only playing with its victim,—and though he

now felt no pain and even seemed convalescing it was only temporary respite.

One consuming desire possessed him, and gave him fictitious strength. He must see Sulpicia, and patiently convincing Glycera of his gratitude, and at the same time of his inflexibility, he embarked upon the first Rome-bound vessel which touched at Corcyra. Like the ghost of his former self he made his way to the postern-gate which had so often turned on silent hinges to admit him to his tryst. Such medicine there is in love's fruition that he might even then have recovered had Sulpicia met him as he dreamed. But instead—the aged crone, his former accomplice, told him the bitter truth that Sulpicia, believing her uncle's message, had yielded at last, not, thank Heaven, to the wretch Pomponius Crassus but to a true and patient love, and was now the bride of her cousin Messalinus.

Distraught by his great trouble, the fine mind of Tibullus, already disordered by mortal illness, gave way, and Horace, finding him wandering demented in the streets, took him to Pedum, in whose loved retirement he trusted that his friend might again find peace. The hope was vain; Tibullus had suffered beyond

endurance, and from the seclusion of his villa he poured forth the ravings of a madman.

His last poems bear so little resemblance to the first delicate flowering of his genius that many critics deny their authorship. Coarse recrimination, threats of revenge, alternate with the deepest despair and suicidal mania, while in the midst of the bitterest denunciation he reiterates his unalterable love.

But one day, when the raging volcano of his heart had burned itself out, at the supreme moment when he lay in the cool shadow of the approaching spirit whose touch upon the pulse calms all fever, he was aware of a wild-eyed, haggard woman who threw herself at the foot of his couch. It was Glycera, whom love and remorse would not suffer to obey his commands, but who had again dared the treacherous seas to seek his forgiveness.

And Tibullus as he listened to her incoherent confession sobbed forth amid passionate caresses and despairing lamentations, and comprehended that it was the philtre given by her hands which had brought him to his death, felt his heart stirred by but one thought:

"Miserable as I am, is it possible that I can lift this crushed rose from the gutter and bring peace to a heart torn with pain?"

"Nemesis," he said, "love was the motive of your fault, therefore I forgive it freely."

It was the message of the Prince of Peace, so ardently longed for, but as yet unheard in Rome, to whom Tibullus might have listened had he continued his voyage with Messala. Who can doubt that he was one of those of whom the Saviour declared, "Other sheep have I who are not of this fold"?

Only one poem of importance marked the brief twilight of the after life of Tibullus. At the request of Messala he wrote the ode celebrating the inauguration of Messalinus as one of the guardians of the Sibylline books, whose prophecies Tibullus himself was so much better fitted to explain. No trace of disappointment or envy is apparent in the noble poem. Though it lacks the fire which leaped from his heart when he honoured the triumph of his patron, it breathes the exquisite refinement and the devotion to lofty ideals of patriotism and religion which characterised his early verse, with a magnanimity of soul not excelled by any Christian writer.

There was a tradition long current in Rome that Messalinus had himself gone to Prænestе to seek the favour of the presence of Tibullus at this ceremony, but that the messenger who

carried the manuscript from the poet's villa to that of the Emperor brought the news that Death had claimed the gentle laureate even as his hand traced the concluding lines. At that word Sulpicia, who had accompanied her husband, had risen suddenly and had fled down the terraced garden and through the dusky, memory-haunted grove past the statue of old Terminus and under the vine-hung pergolas to the poet's villa.

Rising from its threshold, across which she had thrown herself in her despair, Glycera had striven to prevent Sulpicia's entrance; with the challenge, "By what right do you enter here?"

Then, as recognition dawned upon each with the memory of the day when they had sung together the litany to Isis, and watched the sacred ship melt into the sunset, the widowed Glycera stepped aside crying, "yours is the first right. You are Delia." At the name of Delia the eyes of the dying man opened for an instant, and gazed into those of Sulpicia. So gazing his soul passed and the smile upon the dead man's lips was one of rapture ineffable.

Whence came this tradition? Did Sulpicia's

friend, the Princess Julia (who may have been a witness of this parting as she was of the first meeting of the lovers), tell the secret to the young poet Ovid, or was it between the lines of the poems of Tibullus that Ovid found the heart history which he sketched in the Elegy to his friend that is to-day the whitest flower among the crimson blossoms of his own erotic verse?

This lament, which drew tears from the listening multitude, many of whom had known the gentle poet, will fittingly close our story of an almost blameless life:

If mighty goddesses ever with grief for a mortal could sorrow,
Thou Elegia must mourn, mourn for thy favourite bard.
Would that his genius transcendent one moment this poor pen could borrow
That my lament might arise, rise like the incense of nard.

Poets, though fondly we cherish, must pass like the rest through death's portal,
Even great Homer himself passed at the height of his fame,
Only his verse cannot perish, the heroes he sang are immortal,—
So fair Nemesis shall live, deathless be Delia's dear name.

Better the fate of our friend than the one which he dreaded when lying
Sick in that lone Grecian isle, far from his Delia forlorn.
Faithful through long years of absence, she came when she heard he was dying,
Bent o'er his couch in despair, heedless of eyes filled with scorn.

Lavished her tenderest caresses, as once in youth's passionate ardour,
Recked not the repulse of Nemesis, prompted by jealousy's sting,—
"Heart which refused his great love, is thy lot or mine pray the harder?
Mine was the hand he held dying, mine is the hand with the ring."

But what availed ye, O women beloved, that Prænestian Fortune,
Thrice in her temples besought, thrice gave propitious replies?
What the Great Mother Isis with cymbals and dance to importune,
Since ashes and dust in this urn all that was Tibullus lies?

Loving and rev'rent he lived, nor of right god or mortal defrauded.
In the midst of our bitter lamenting his death wakes this impious thought,

Whether indeed the high gods he so faithfully served
and so lauded
Be but a beautiful dream, glamour, delusion, and
naught!

Perish such blasphemous lies! From his couch in
Elysium vernal
Leaps up Catullus and cries: "Welcome, my
friend, to the blest!
'T is only suffering that dies, but joyance and love
are eternal."
Safely, O urn, guard thy prize; gently, O earth,
press his breast.

OCTAVIA, SISTER OF AUGUSTUS AND WIFE OF MARK ANTONY

JULIA, DAUGHTER OF AUGUSTUS
From a white carnelian in collection of Louis XIV
C. Simonneau sc., 1713

CHAPTER II

THE SONG OF THE SIRENS

I

AT CAPRI

So I turned to the sea, and there slumbered
As greenly as ever
Those Isles of the Sirens, your Galli;
No ages can sever
The three, nor enable the sister
To join them—half-way
On the voyage she looked at Ulysses.

THE Princess had gazed at them listlessly all the morning, those misty Siren Islets nestling under the heights of the Sorrentan peninsula across the shimmering water, on which the rippling breeze played a perpetual fugue of colour-tones from pale green through blue to purple and from violet back again to jade.

It was possibly the most beautiful panorama in all the world, for the Emperor's villa commanded not alone the glorious Neapolitan bay curving from Misenum past the mountain whose menacing smoky pillar rose high above gay, unheeding Pompeii, but from the marble terrace one could sweep also the gulf of Salerno, to the vague spots in the amethystine distance which persons of strong eyesight, or stronger imagination, recognised as the temples of Pæstum.

But the daughter of Augustus stared sullenly at the enchanting landscape, sick to the death of its familiar loveliness. And yet it was here that Julia had spent the happiest hours of her childhood, with her father's sister Octavia and the troop of cousins, the gentle Marcellus among the rest to whom she had been wedded at fifteen.

"Short-lived and unfortunate were those to whom the Roman people gave their love," for two brief years had scarcely passed when the girl-widow and the bereaved mother wept as Virgil read before them his matchless lines:

Heu miserande puer!
Tu Marcellus eris. Manibus date lilia plenis
Purpureos spargam flores.

So Julia had chosen Octavia's villa at Capri as the retreat in which to spend her months of mourning; but at seventeen one cannot mourn for ever—the merry cousins who had roamed the island with her in the old days were at the Emperor's palace on the Palatine, and the sight of Octavia's grief, so much deeper and more lasting than her own, at first depressed and finally wearied Julia almost past endurance.

The pitying Octavia could not comprehend that the melancholy of her daughter-in-law was not so much sorrow as revolt against sorrow, an intolerable longing for joy and laughter, for romping and love, and an unspeakable loathing of this monotony of tears.

"How much longer must it last?" she asked herself. For over a year Augustus had respected the grief of his sister and daughter, but he must realise that his only child could not be permitted to spend her life in widowhood. He had no son, and in choosing a son-in-law he announced his successor,—the future Emperor of Rome.

Ah! that was the terrible factor in her fate which gripped Julia's heart when she thought of her future. Whom would her father choose? Of his love she had no doubt; but

he had said that he had two daughters, Julia and the Empire, and he knew not which gave him most anxiety. She knew too well that if he must decide between her happiness and the good of Rome that he would sacrifice her without hesitation as he would himself, there would be no possibility of evading or of altering that inflexible will.

It was this knowledge which curbed her impatience, which made her accept tedium and vacuity rather than hasten to unknown evils. And yet there was one whom he might choose, like Marcellus her cousin (or almost a cousin), and when she thought what life would mean to her as his wife she felt herself brave enough to climb to her father's knee as in her childhood and drawing his massive head close to her lips whisper her lover's name. Suddenly, as the determination grew strong within her, she heard it shouted joyously by the servants of the villa.

"Antonius, Antonius! Salve, salve! Now we shall have happy days for Antonius has returned."

She sprang to the balustrade of the terrace and saw him striding rapidly up the steep path. He had discarded his toga and wore the simple tunic of the islanders, displaying

to advantage the slender but well-knit figure, which in its graceful alertness resembled the Greek rather than the Roman type.

It was two years since they had parted, and he had matured; his face had more of intelligence and distinction, but the same ardent eyes and mobile mouth whose curves responded instantly to every wave of feeling. Intense and unrestrained, those feelings could express themselves passionately and eloquently in language, for he inherited both the temperament and the talents of his father, Mark Antony, while in face and form he reproduced the striking beauty of his mother, the fervid Fulvia.

Julia threw herself upon his neck sobbing her delight, while he kissed her forehead, calling her "little sister, little queen," and all the pet names of their childhood.

Octavia, the deserted second wife of Mark Antony, had borne her sorrows with a sweet and forgiving spirit and had even adopted the children of her roving husband, bringing them up with Marcellus and Marcella, her own son and daughter by her first marriage.

So unbounded was the tenderness of this loving woman that it had overflowed to Julia, her brother's motherless daughter, who escaped

on every possible occasion from her own uncongenial home, to that of her aunt. But Octavia's beautiful character which radiated unselfishness and affection was most unfortunate for her niece who, possibly because Iulus Antonius was in no way related to her, perversely loved him best of all. As for Antonius he had always loved her. There had been a time when the boy might have had excuse for ambitious hopes, for in the days of the triumvirate Augustus and Mark Antony had sealed their friendship by pledging their children in marriage. But when, infatuated by Cleopatra, Antony had proved himself a traitor to Octavia and to Rome it was inevitable that the engagement between Julia and Iulus Antonius should be forfeited.

Augustus bore no rancour to the son of the man who had wronged him, and magnanimously planned for him a brilliant legal career, sending him, at the time of Julia's marriage to Marcellus, to study at Athens. But previous to this, with a strange obtuseness as to what might result, he had made no change in his sister's domestic arrangements, allowing Julia to enjoy with the mixed family an intimacy as close as that of brothers and sisters.

It was of their childhood that they now talked, of roaming together, over the beautiful island, climbing its heights, or circling its picturesque coast in tiny rowboats, of exploring the grottoes, of fishing, swimming, and watching the games of old Greece, still practised by the descendants of the early Greek settlers.

On account of his expertness in their sports the young Capriotes had constituted Antonius their leader. It pleased him to excel and his eyes shone as Julia rehearsed his boyish triumphs.

"You were always a redoubtable little antagonist," he said, "whether in running, swimming, or in our studies. I remember, too, that once when we were visiting at Livia's villa and she gave each of us boys game-cock quails, you insisted on having one also to match with mine. And what a baby Marcellus was, for he cried when his was killed by that of Tiberius."

"Marcellus was always like that," Julia replied. "He would have kept the heart of a child if he had lived a hundred years——"

"And yet they married you to that boy! The gods send when next you are wedded it be to a man."

Julia looked at him askance. "What do you say to Tiberius?" she asked.

"I said a man, not a beast," he cried, "though what a handsome brute he has grown! And you, Julia, how marriage has changed you! You were a child when I went and now you are a woman, a goddess!"

She laughed softly. "You are changed too," she said.

"It was your marriage that made a man of me. I was your brother till then, but when they wrote me at Athens that I could never be anything else, I woke to the knowledge of a man's love and despair. I came back to Rome when I learned that you were widowed, only to find that your father had shut you away from the world as completely as if you were a vestal. But that is over now. They tell me that you are to be welcomed back to the Palatine with a great festival and that the lists are open to suitors for your hand. So here I am to enter my name first of all."

"No, not the first," she retorted teasingly, and when he besought the names of his rivals refused to speak of them, commanding him to tell her of his student-life at Athens. "Is it true," she asked, "that you have devoted

yourself with entire singleness of purpose to the study of law?"

"I have worked," he admitted, "but with a divided heart, for political jurisprudence is not my only mistress."

"Some fair Greek woman, perhaps, shares your affection."

"Nine Julia, the Muses—the world will know me one day as a poet."

"Like Virgil, Horace, or Tibullus?"

"Like none of these, though Horace has praised my verses. I have taken the passionate Catullus as my master, but I am of a younger generation, of a class of men who stand for freer thought and life. Have you read the poems of Ovid? He was my most intimate friend at Athens, where he was sent by Messala, who loved him for his elegy on Tibullus. He is the leader of the new school, and is already famous in Rome."

"We are not so ignorant at Capri as you seem to think. I have not only heard of Ovid but have heard him, for he is at my father's villa. He came down with Tiberius, who employs him to write his letters."

"And he writes them to you?"

She nodded mischievously. "I told you, you were not the first."

"Julia," he cried angrily, "are they trying to marry you to Tiberius?"

Her cheek burned and she answered bitterly, "You must have known they would."

"And you do not love him?" he asked jealously.

"Love him! I would kill myself rather than be his wife."

"Then," he asked, "if your father will accept me as his son-in-law,—and there is no reason why he should not, for I am of as good blood as Tiberius,—would you marry me, Julia?"

"Yes, yes," she cried eagerly and then, as he folded her close, she added less flatteringly, "I would marry any one to escape from Tiberius."

The danger was so imminent that she could take little comfort in the assurances of Antonius that the Emperor would approve his suit. "If it rested with him alone," she said thoughtfully, "my father might, indeed, prefer you to Tiberius. But the situation is not so simple, for there is Livia."

There indeed was Livia, Julia's stepmother, whose influence, relentlessly malign, could by no means be discounted. For the family of Augustus, like that of his sister, had been

rendered complex by former marriages on both sides—but unlike Octavia, Livia had not been able to establish harmony between her two sons, Tiberius and Drusus, and the Emperor's daughter.

It was not Livia's fault that this was the case, for though her heart was centred upon Tiberius with such intensity that her sole purpose in life, the one for which she cajoled and intrigued (and possibly sinned), was to secure to him the succession of the Empire, she realised that this end could only be attained through his marriage with Julia, and with politic hypocrisy she had endeavoured to win the girl's affection.

But between these two children, brother and sister in name alone, there had existed from the first moment of their association a mutual repulsion, deepening, as they grew to know each other more thoroughly, into detestation on the part of Julia and malignant hatred on that of Tiberius. Of utterly uncongenial tastes, they were alike only in the stubbornness which pitted them against each other, and violent outbreaks were only avoided by keeping them as much as possible from each other's company.

Augustus, who loved his wife deeply and

knew how her heart was set upon the union of their children, would from the first have given her ambition the support of his authority but for his desire to establish the Julian dynasty in the succession of his nephew Marcellus. The death of this beloved prince, from whom so much had been hoped, removed an otherwise insurmountable obstacle to Livia's hopes. Her opportunity had come again, and it would not be neglected.

A silence had fallen upon the young lovers at the mention of her name, broken first by Antonius.

"Poor child," he said, "what a pity that you are not the daughter of a peasant, but must be fought and plotted for, yes, and bartered as though you were a province."

"Rather more than one province, my Antonius," Julia replied drily.

"Well, twenty provinces if you will. Does the number make the transaction less commercial?"

It was on her lip to make some sarcastic rejoinder but she was silent, and he continued, "Has Livia annoyed you long?"

"Yes, ever since Marcellus sickened. I knew the meaning of her fawning hypocritical sympathy even before he died,—but it is only

lately that she has frankly besought me to marry Tiberius. I told her that I could never care for him, and she gave me a love-potion. 'Brew this,' she said, 'over a lamp, and drink it with my son, and you will love each other madly.' It seems that she procured it from the sorceress Canidia, who assured her that it was never known to fail. With it Nemesis bewitched even the faithful Tibullus so that he forsook Sulpicia."

"You did not obey her?"

"No, but lest she administer it to me unawares, I shall feign to do so. I will make a decoction of saffron which I will drink with Tiberius;—and oh, Antonius,—the thought has just come to me,—you and I will pledge each other in the real philtre, and if it is of such power as she vaunts nothing henceforth can part us from each other."

She brought a tiny tripod upon which she set the phial, and lighting a lamp beneath it they watched the potion bubble while they discussed plan after plan only to abandon each as inadequate.

"Whom can we oppose to your stepmother as our advocate with the Emperor?" Antonius mused. "There is Octavia, she would surely take my part."

"Livia has gained a strange influence over my aunt," Julia replied. "She has feigned an intense interest in Marcella for whom she is negotiating a great marriage. Octavia is fond of us, but she is a mother, she loves best her own flesh and blood. She will not ruin Marcella's future by offending Livia, and though my father cherishes for his sister a very tender affection he has no confidence in her judgment, and would never be guided by her in such a matter."

"If Mæcenas were not superseded as his councillor he would aid me. He was my father's friend, and arranged his marriage with Octavia, but alas, Mæcenas has retired from public affairs to his villa on the Esquiline to the society of Virgil and Horace, and Augustus is completely ruled by Agrippa."

Julia sprang to her feet with such vehemence that she overturned the little lamp and the liquid was spilled.

"The potion is lost," she said regretfully, "but no matter, it had a most disagreeable odour, and we shall not need it, for the vapour alone may have put into my mind the name of the good genius who will smooth the way to our desires."

"And who is he?"

She whirled him about so that he faced the entrancing prospect. "Tell me what you see over yonder!" she exclaimed excitedly.

The attention of Antonius was instantly arrested by a vessel making its way toward Capri from the naval station of Misenum.

"The admiral's flag-ship," he replied. "I can make out the *vexillum cæruleum* of Agrippa, with the dolphins on its sea-green field."

"Precisely, and my father will deny him nothing. We will ask Agrippa to intercede for us."

"Agrippa! Have you forgotten Actium —that it was he who defeated my father and drove him to suicide?"

"And for that very reason he will aid Mark Antony's innocent son, for Agrippa is just. Moreover we ask him at a fortunate time, for the happy long to make others so. He comes to Capri to consummate his marriage with Marcella."

"Marcella!" Antonius repeated, as though bewildered.

"Yes, Agrippa is the famed bridegroom whom Livia has secured for our little sister."

"But Marcella is only a child, and he is a

widower, the father of a daughter fully as old as she."

"Of Vipsania, Marcella's dearest friend; but Agrippa, though he is the real power behind my father's throne, is but thirty-seven, a man in the prime of life, and Marcella is of marriageable age. It is a great match for her, no wonder that my aunt is overjoyed."

"And Marcella—is she overjoyed also?"

"The little fool weeps day and night, as though she were to be thrown to the Minotaur. One would fancy that she was in love with some one else, but that is impossible."

Antonius was silent; and Julia continued, "I must go to her and prepare her to meet her future husband."

"Nay, come with me for a little row in the skiff that is fastened down yonder—to the Isle of Idleness where we have fished from the rocks so often. I do not care to meet Agrippa, besides we have made no definite plans, and who knows when we may have another opportunity to talk together."

They descended to the beach and Antonius took the oars, but instead of crossing to the islet they followed the coast, which grew more and more precipitous as they approached the

tremendous cliff still crowned by the ruins of the villa of Tiberius.

At its foot the rocks made a natural breakwater sheltering a deep pool, into which, when the tide was at its flow, the surges rushed like wild animals, stampeded within the narrowing walls of some enclosure, and finding no outlet dashed madly around to the entrance to meet the incoming waves in wild confusion.

Very different was its aspect at low tide, which had given the pool the name of the Siren's Mirror, for then, shut off by the rocks from the turbulent sea, its mysterious waters lay black and smooth as a Claude Lorraine glass, reflecting the cliff which seemed to descend to illimitable depths.

It was low tide now, and Julia begged Antonius to allow her a nearer view of the pool. " They say," she said, " that some have seen portents pictured on its surface, but never their own faces."

This was quite true, for the position of the rocks made it impossible to look directly down, and the beholder perceived objects reflected at an angle.

Antonius saw Julia's face, her dusky hair melting into the shadows, but her eyes clear and shining gazing into the depths of his soul

and her red lips parted in eager expectancy. He continued to gaze silently, hungrily, as he had not dared to look to-day into the eyes themselves.

The impatient tap of her foot broke the spell. "What do you see?" she asked.

"The Siren," he replied, "with waving arms and an all-compelling smile which draws me almost beyond my power to resist."

"Then come away at once," Julia cried, "or you will lose your hold and fall into the pool."

"It is glamourie," he said, staggering back. "She had a confident look, as one might say, 'Go now, but I shall claim you by and by.' I have a premonition that I shall meet my death in that pool."

"What has come over you Antonius? I never saw you like this. See, I will kill your Siren," and Julia tossed a stone into the pool. "Now it is my turn to look and I shall report a more propitious omen." But the startled girl crept to his side silent and awe-struck for what she saw was the figure of a man circling rapidly in the rippling pool, not with the vigorous movements of a swimmer, but inert as the corpse of one drowned, with ghastly face and protruding, terror-stricken

eyes. Round and round it swirled as though driven by the whirlpool and though the features were distorted they were unmistakably those of Antonius. She clung to him and it was his turn to soothe and encourage. "Something tells me," she said, "that our love will bring us unhappiness. Will you love me as now, Antonius, no matter what may happen?"

"Always, beloved, and if the Siren that I saw in the pool calls me to death, I will go gladly, for she had your face."

Julia did not reply, but her look of deep content satisfied him. Glancing upward a moment later her attention was attracted by the entrance to a cavern high on the face of the precipice. "I have always longed to explore that grotto," she said, "probably because it is impossible to do so, for the forbidden has always had for me the most intense attraction."

Antonius pointed to a path which zigzagged from the shore. "It is not absolutely inaccessible," he said, "Tiberius and I climbed to it years ago. There is the path. I believe you could manage it, for you are as sure-footed as a wild-goat. I will knot my girdle to yours and pull you up after me. But the descent

will be more difficult, perhaps you would better not venture."

"I am in a reckless mood to-day, Antonius. If you love me let me do it. We will climb to the cavern. If we cannot come down, so much the better. They will not be able to separate us and we shall die together."

Antonius shrugged his shoulders. "As you will," he replied, and began the ascent.

Breathless, and with flushed faces, they reached their goal, an ancient grotto-temple, mysteriously shadowy and refreshingly cool. An altar of white marble exquisitely carved stood on the very verge of the overhanging cliff.

This circumstance seemed to be proof that the Sirens themselves were the deities placated here by the early Greek settlers. Possibly when storms raged upon the strait the wives and mothers of mariners lighted a flame upon this altar to serve the double purpose of a beacon to the voyagers and an oblation that would persuade the Sirens to cease the singing which only Ulysses could hear and resist.

"And even he could not have done so," Julia reminded Antonius, "if his companions, who had stopped their own ears with wax, had not bound him to the mast. What did they

sing, Antonius? You, who are a poet, should be able to tell us the words of their song."

"A capital theme!" he exclaimed. "Have patience for a moment and I will tell you."

He took a tablet from his bosom, and she watched him admiringly as he rapidly wrote, and in the flush of creative enthusiasm read to her the verses which she had inspired:

With billowing canvas on the wine-dark seas
  Ulysses' galley rides, while wafted o'er
  A cadence flows and falls from off the shore
Like scent among the blossoming almond trees,
Wafted and wasted by the wanton breeze.
  "Draw near, O Greek," the Sirens sweet implore,
  "For thou shalt learn infinitude of lore,
And slake thy heart-thirst in our melodies."

His deafened comrades loose the swelling sail,
  Against his will he passes by secure,
    Lashed to the mast but struggling to be free.
While vague as perfume floats the dying wail,
  The spell resisted claims its forfeiture
    Of life for love from Queen Parthenope.

"Set the song to music," he entreated. "I shall coast the island for a few days, and if you will sing it to me you have but to light a fire upon this altar and I will come to you."

"If I needed you," she mused, "it might

not be possible for me to clamber to this almost inaccessible spot."

"True, and the islet in front of Octavia's villa is a much better rendezvous. No one ever goes there but that little Greek, Masgabas, who lies all day upon the rocks apparently doing nothing but dreaming. Your father noted him and named his favourite haunt the Isle of Idleness. In reality, he is not so idle as he seems, but is watching his nets. He is devoted to me. I will arrange with him a system of signalling by waving torches. It will never be suspected, for he is accustomed to spear fish by torchlight. Then, whenever you are at the villa I can communicate with you."

Julia had been humming abstractedly an old tune.

"There is a little boat down yonder. I wonder if the tall man in the stern who is looking this way could hear my voice. I will sing your Siren song now," and clear and sweet the words rang out and the listener heard them distinctly as he gazed:

"Draw near, draw near, . . .
And slake thy heart-thirst in our melodies."

The stranger in the boat waved his hand,

and the rowers made directly for the shore. Julia retreated precipitately into the cavern. "I have been too successful," she said. "I believe he is preparing to scale the cliff. Is there no other way out?"

"One formerly existed," replied Antonius. "This grotto is only one of a series which extend far into the heart of the cliff, and from the last there is a subterranean stairway which leads to the summit. It was the way the devotees descended to their temple. But your father, when he forbade the Siren-cult, had the passage choked and the little temple to Jove is built at its upper outlet."

"Let us explore the inner caverns," Julia insisted, "at least we can hide there from this inquisitive stranger."

The light from the outer grotto was reflected dimly by the stalactite-hung walls and Julia, darting in advance of Antonius, presently reached the stairway. Here she was arrested by the sound of footsteps; an instant later the light of a torch showed a dark figure descending the staircase and Tiberius appeared in the arched entrance. He was the first to recover from the surprise of the encounter.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, then catching sight of Antonius he continued, "I

need not ask. So this is the wife whom my mother has chosen for me, and whom I have refused to marry! Yes, it is as well for you to know that I have already refused, that I so hate you, that were you as chaste as your father thinks you, not even the bribe of the Empire could induce me to make you my wife."

Julia regarded him with scorn. "You cannot hate me as much as I hate you, Tiberius. Your refusal of my hand is the first act of yours which has ever pleased me. I cannot conceive of any woman so wretched as to be willing to marry you."

"There is one," he cried, "in every way nobler than yourself,—Vipsania, the daughter of Agrippa; she loves me as I do her, and I thank my protecting genius that I have found you out, shameless one, for I shall have another reason to offer your father for declining the honour of your hand. Fortunately I have companions at hand to bear witness to what is happening here. Ovid, come hither and declare that the letters which I had you write and which my mother sent to Julia were intended not for her but for Vipsania. Mark well also in whose company I now find the Princess."

Antonius sprang forward with a cry of rage, but a firm grasp from behind held him as in a trap, and an authoritative voice addressed the frightened Ovid whose pale face now appeared over the shoulder of Tiberius.

"Yes, Publius Ovidius, it is indeed fortunate that you are here, and that Iulus Antonius and I should *both* have been with the Princess when the fancy struck her to explore this interesting cavern, as otherwise her chance meeting with Tiberius might have had the appearance of a rendezvous."

Tiberius gazed with speechless stupefaction at Agrippa, for it was the great vice-regent, who, responding to the call of the Siren, had so opportunely appeared in Julia's defence. Gratitude and a consciousness of detection was evident in the flush which mantled the face of Antonius, and Julia's self-possession alone matched that of Agrippa.

She laughed provokingly at the discomfiture of Tiberius. "He would hardly have been so frank," she said to Agrippa, "had he known that the man whom he desired as a father-in-law was listening to his fervid declarations."

"On that very account I cannot doubt their honesty," Agrippa replied kindly. "If my daughter indeed reciprocates your affection,

Tiberius, I will speak to Augustus on your behalf and neither the Princess nor you need fear that you will be forced into a marriage in regard to which you have expressed such unanimity of feeling."

Agrippa drew Julia's arm within his own with a smile, and remarking that the staircase seemed a less difficult means of egress than the way by which they had entered, requested Antonius to order his sailors not to await his return.

As the young man turned to execute the errand, the Admiral recalled him. "As you will reach the villa of Octavia before me," he said, "I will trouble you to deliver this letter to Marcella."

Antonius scowled and Agrippa added an aside which Julia did not hear. She waved her hand gaily to her lover in farewell but he stood staring at the letter like one bewildered.

The staircase debouched in a cellar beneath the lighthouse where Agrippa took leave of Tiberius and Ovid and as Julia walked homeward under his escort her heart swelled with a gratitude which was almost affection.

"I have not half thanked you," she said, as she nestled confidingly closer. "You have

saved me from two dreadful things, a loveless marriage and a ruined reputation."

He did not disclaim the truth of her assertion. "Innocence is always daring," he said kindly, "it forgets that the evil-minded regard the opportunity of wrong-doing as proof that it has been done."

"I have had my lesson," she replied meekly.

"I wish I could help you still further," he added.

"I was wondering if I dared ask for further intercession with my father," Julia answered.

"Why do you not go directly to him?"

"Because he is so stern, so unloving, and so good. You are so different. I wish you were my father."

He raised his eyebrows. "I am thankful I am not," he retorted quickly.

"Because I am such a wilful daughter?" she frowned.

"You are perfect. Never mind the reason if it does not occur to you. What were you thinking of asking me to mention to your father?"

"I—no—it is Antonius who ought to ask you, not I."

"Oh! It regards Antonius then. I think

I can guess. You have a very sisterly affection for him, have you not?"

She nodded eagerly.

"That is quite natural, for he and Marcellus were stepbrothers. Marcella has just confessed to me how lovable he is."

"Oh, pardon me!" she exclaimed. "I have forgotten to congratulate you. Marcella has her mother's gentle character, she will be a model wife."

"Doubtless, but not mine, so you made no mistake in withholding your felicitations."

"Are you not to marry Marcella? My stepmother told me that the solemn betrothal had taken place, and she seemed greatly pleased."

"The august Livia desired also that you should become the wife of her son. This is a day of disappointment for her, and of surprise for many. I will confide to you that my affianced bride has confessed to me that she loves Antonius; after that I had no choice but to set her free."

"Antonius!" Julia exclaimed in consternation, "Marcella loves Antonius! Why, they have been brought up as brother and sister."

"Which quite explains their affection for each other. I thought you knew it, that the

THE VILLA OF AUGUSTUS ON THE PRESENT PUNTA TRAGARA, CAPRI
Restored by C. Weichardt

"Few men deserve the women they love," Agrippa replied gravely, "but you can sometimes make us deserve you; and love is the only power that can so transform us."

"Love?" she said bitterly, and then laughed a little mirthless laugh. "Whatever the event, my lord Agrippa, you have proved yourself a clever match-maker. Tiberius is to have Vipsania, and Antonius, Marcella; but you have given no thought to me. What I ask you, is to become——"

She paused in wild surprise at something incredible which she read for the first time in his face.

"You are wrong, Julia," he said, "from the first it has been of you, and of you only, that I have thought."

II

THE BIRD'S STORY

So what might tell the tale
Unless the wind should tell it, or the bird
Who from its cage the thing had seen and heard?

Hark to my Indian cockatoo,
To his hoop of gold he clings,

How he trembles with crest uplifted
And shrieks as he madly swings.

Oh! cockatoo shriek for Antony,
Cry, "Come, my love, come home!"
Shriek, "Antony, Antony, Antony,"
Till he hears you even in Rome.
WILLIAM WETMORE STORY.

The three marriages had taken place—conferring temporary happiness on all concerned—with the exception of Livia, and she could bide her time.

Apparently the very happiest of all was Julia, for stung by her double rejection she had displayed a feverish eagerness in parading her bliss before the world, and particularly before Antonius.

The latter had shown a becoming melancholy, he had even begged her to permit him to "explain"; but Julia had silenced him with a look of proud disdain. She told herself that she knew what that explanation would be—the necessity of submitting to the inevitable. He had done so too promptly and with too good a grace not to have foreseen the result. She believed that he had deliberately led her on to a confession of her own love knowing all the while that their marriage was impos-

sible, and she thanked the gods that had opened her eyes enabling her to estimate the characters of Antonius and Agrippa each at their proper value.

Her heart had been caught in its rebound, and her wounded pride was healed by the adoration and pre-eminence of her husband. For she knew that, Emperor's daughter though she was, the marriage conferred more honour upon her than upon Agrippa.

The undisguised assumption of authority in the man who held the second place in the government never roused the Emperor's jealousy for he knew that his life-long friend was utterly devoted to his service, and even the insinuations of Livia could not shake his absolute trust.

It was a friendship almost unique in the history of the world, dating from the murder of Julius Cæsar when his nephew, the young Octavius, set out with this boy-comrade to fight for, and to win through his help the title of Augustus.

None can hesitate as to the comparative abilities of the two. It was Agrippa who won the victories by sea and land—and whose statesmanship held what had been won. His tastes were far more magnificent than those

of the Emperor and he displayed them without restraint in the buildings with which he endowed Rome.

The Theatre of Marcellus had been completed by Augustus in honour of Julia's first marriage about the same time that Agrippa recorded his dedication of the Pantheon in deep-cut letters which one may read to-day above its portico. To celebrate his marriage with Julia, Agrippa felt that he must surpass both of these works and he donated to the city the famous baths that completed the great system of waterworks which he had already inaugurated.

Sternly repressed by her father, Julia found herself suddenly enveloped in an atmosphere of doting affection in which her nature expanded like some gorgeous flower. The sullen girl developed into a beautiful and brilliant woman; cultured as well as pleasure-loving, she became not alone the leader of society, and toast of the young bloods, but a patroness of poets and artists, throwing the aging and bourgeois Empress completely in the shade—outrivalling her in wit, in aristocratic bearing, in the plenitude of her marvellous beauty, and in popularity.

Agrippa delighted in his wife's brilliancy,

THE PANTHEON OF AGRIPPA

as the owner of some splendid diamond might gloat over its lustre and display it for the admiration of all beholders. Augustus had given him the house of Mark Antony upon the Palatine, and in everything but prestige. it became more truly a palace than the home of the Emperor.

Julia was empress in all but name, and her domestic life was as happy as her social position was pre-eminent. Four children were born: two boys, Caius and Lucius, and two girls, Agrippina and Julia. Augustus had never before manifested such love for his daughter, such satisfaction in her conduct, such fatherly tenderness and sympathy, and he published his affection for his grandsons by adopting them, thus placing them in line for the imperial succession, a step most gratifying to Agrippa, who, though singularly disinterested in regard to himself, was ambitious for his sons. It was the Emperor's partiality for Caius and Lucius which was Livia's daily torture, and which finally awoke the slumbering rivalry of Tiberius.

Permitted to marry in accordance with his own desires, Tiberius had grown less morose and had gained the good opinion of Augustus. In

the command of the army, he had shown marked ability, and for a time had contented himself with this position, but Livia could not accept this lesser honour in lieu of the one which she coveted for her son. If Augustus had had no direct male descendants, he would have chosen Tiberius as his successor, but the grandsons were safe in the guardianship of their father. While he and they lived there was no hope for Tiberius, and Agrippa was in the fulness of his mental and physical powers, and would probably outlive the Emperor, his influence with the Senate was as absolute as with Augustus, his character was unimpeachable, known, and praised of all. The situation seemed to Tiberius hopeless, and Livia admitted that it was so—unless something should happen to Agrippa. At that answer mother and son looked at each other, but no further word was spoken.

There is something sinister as well as sublime in the obsession of a mother's love. It renders the timid and selfish capable of the highest heroism, but can also transform the naturally religious into unscrupulous criminals. The ambition of Tiberius was calculating, it had developed slowly, attracted by the possibility of success, and directed by the mind

of a tactician who undertakes no move in the game he is playing until he understands its bearing on the entire sequence of events. Livia's ambition had wakened with his birth, unreasoning, relentless it leaped insurmountable obstacles, and never ceased until the eager flame of her life burned itself out.

They could both wait, and Livia taught her son to yield in appearance without relinquishing his indomitable purpose, while he showed her how to take advantage of the time of truce by removing one by one the barriers to opportunity.

For nine years Agrippa's and Julia's stars waxed in brilliancy and the harmony which apparently existed between their family and that of the Emperor was undisturbed. Circumstance favoured this armed peace, for Augustus, Livia, and Tiberius spent much of the time in Gaul while Agrippa took Julia and his children with him when for four years he regulated the affairs of the Orient.

The return of the two families to Rome was celebrated by a great public festival, organised by Iulus Antonius, who was now prætor. The famous Trojan games were performed by the knights, and Antonius, who had defrayed the expense of the entertainment,

composed the poem of welcome so lauded by Horace. The day following this demonstration, Livia invited the relatives to a reunion of a more intimate character at her villa near the Via Flaminia.

Julia had not entered it since her girlhood; but here the Augustan family had spent much of the time when they were supposed to be in residence upon the Palatine. The Emperor believed that children should be brought up simply, and in this middle-class suburban home Julia had spun and woven and tended her stepmother's white fowls, for Livia was an ardent poultry fancier, and either from this circumstance or because the house overflowed with his own and his sister Octavia's children Augustus had playfully nicknamed the villa, "The Chicken Coop."

A rush of old associations softened Julia's heart as she laid a wreath before the majestic statue of her father which Livia that day unveiled in the atrium, and then led her own little brood between the laurel hedges to inspect the aviary.

As she did so, she was suddenly confronted by Iulus Antonius, who greeted her with the familiarity of an old friend. With her utmost endeavour she could not repress a slight em-

AUGUSTUS
Museum of the Vatican

the lattice of the aviary, turning her back upon him, but he followed her, speaking in her ear in tones of intense passion: "I loved you then with all my heart, I love you now. I shall always love you."

"Hush! hush!" she commanded. "You have said too much—this is infamous."

There was a moment's silence, in which the cockatoo sidled along the perch and with its head on one side regarded them with diabolical cunning. "Pretty, pretty Julia," it said, cajolingly. She struck the lattice and it flew away to the children. Then facing Antonius, she spoke more calmly:

"Perhaps after all it is best that we should face this matter and then dismiss it for ever. The past is dead. Let us admit that we are glad that we were kept from a great mistake, that the kind fates in giving us Marcella and Agrippa have ordered our lives better than we planned or deserved, and that under no circumstances, even were we now free to do so, could we regard each other more warmly than friends."

"I cannot so perjure myself," he replied. "I love you, I shall always love you."

"Antonius!" she exclaimed, "you are

beneath all contempt. Never speak to me again so long as you live."

"One word," he insisted, "and I obey you. You asked me if I intended to accept the consulship offered me. It will necessitate my leaving Rome for a number of years and fixing my residence in Thebes, for Gallus has mismanaged affairs, and Egypt is on the verge of rebellion. Your husband urges me to go. It seems," he added bitterly, "that the name of Antony has still some little influence in Egypt. It was Agrippa's argument that I might reconcile the country to Roman rule. If you mean what you have just said, I shall go."

"Go by all means," she replied, still too much incensed to add any softening word of approval of the undertaking as one worthy of his highest endeavour. He had given no hint of its danger though he realised that in accepting the commission he was offering his life in reparation of his father's dishonour. It was not until long after that Julia realised this. Her one thought now was to have him out of her sight for ever.

"Go," she reiterated. "Most certainly I mean what I said. It is the proper place for you and you will doubtless find there

some fair Cleopatra who will soon console you."

His cheek burned under the insult. "Your commands are my law," he said, "I shall not trouble you again. You did me the honour long ago to keep the sonnet I wrote at your command,—'The Song of the Sirens.' Will you send me a copy of it for my collection?"

"You mistake, I never had it," she replied decisively.

"You carried it away when you left the cave, for it was not there when I returned for it the next day with Ovid."

"It was not there! Could Tiberius have picked it up?"

"What is this you are saying about Tiberius?" a voice interpolated behind them, and turning they faced him approaching with his mother.

"I was speaking of one of my poems which I left in the Sirens' cave at Capri, and which I will thank you to return," replied Antonius.

"I know nothing of it," Tiberius asserted, "I am not a collector of poems."

"Certainly not," assented Livia; "why do you ask him?"

Julia reddened under her prying gaze and strove to turn her stepmother's attention to

her children who were still amusing themselves with the parrot.

"He is a bad bird," said Caius, "he repeats everything he hears. He is a real tattle-tale."

"Tattle, tattle," cackled the cockatoo. "Julia, Julia, pretty Julia, love you, love you, love you. Hush! hush! Antonius! Antonius! Ha! ha! tattle, tattle, tattle."

All laughed but the persons implicated. Julia was silent and confused, and Antonius muttered, "That is not a bird, but a demon."

"What was that poem of which Antonius was speaking?" Livia asked her son, after her guests had departed.

"Trash!" Tiberius replied, "idiotic, love-sick trash—'The Song of the Sirens.'"

"Then you found it?"

"Yes, and destroyed it," and he explained the circumstances under which he had discovered the song, the poet, and Julia in the cave at Capri.

"You made a mistake to destroy it. However, they will furnish us with more damaging testimony than that. We must have a spy in Julia's household, for she will bear watching."

"Yes, and your spy will turn traitor, and inform her of your plots," Tiberius replied.

"One can never count certainly on the faithfulness of any human being."

"True, but I have one informer who will report secrets exactly as he hears them, who will not be suspected and cannot be corrupted by bribes to hold his tongue."

"Impossible."

Livia touched a gong and a slave entered. "Take my cockatoo to the wife of Agrippa," she commanded, "and say to the lady Julia, that the little Agrippina seemed so pleased with it that Livia sends the gift in token of the pleasure which the events of the day have given her."

"Your clever expedient proves to be utterly fatuous," Tiberius remarked to his mother a few days later. "Antonius has left Rome to assume the governorship of Egypt."

"Agrippa's work!" exclaimed Livia. "He sees how affairs are going in his family and will not suffer his wife to ruin herself."

"How long is Agrippa to be allowed to frustrate our plans?" asked Tiberius.

"Patience, patience," replied his mother. "A day may change the destiny of a nation."

The words seemed prophetic, for on the morrow Rome was in consternation. The prime minister had been stricken with agonis-

ing convulsions which the hastily summoned physicians could not relieve. The distracted wife in a state of mind bordering upon insanity tore the images of the lares from their pedestals, threatening to burn them unless her husband was restored.

Agrippa in a lucid interval called for her and she pillowed the masterful head upon her bosom, crying, "I am here, I am here, Agrippa; you are better now, say that you are better!"

He looked into her dry eyes and murmured, "What will become of you, Julia, if—if anything happens to me?"

"Yes, what will become of me?" she repeated in anguish. "Think, think, Agrippa, what will become of me, and of your children?"

The brow of the dying man contracted in agony, but with a great effort he replied: "Your father, Augustus."

"I will care for them, my friend of friends," exclaimed the Emperor. "Are they not my children also?"

"Obey him absolutely, promise," commanded Agrippa, and as Julia gave her word the contorted features relaxed and the expression on the dead face was one of ineffable contentment.

The grief of Augustus was commensurate with his loss. He gave his other self a king's burial in his own mausoleum, and himself pronounced the funeral oration. But of these distinguished testimonials to her husband's greatness Julia knew nothing. For days and weeks her life hung in the balance. A fifth child, Agrippa Posthumus, had come through the gates of sorrow into an heritage of disaster. The mother manifested no interest in the unfortunate babe, or in anything that transpired about her. From the first Livia had, as was natural, taken possession of the invalid and the household. Never was there a more devoted nurse, for Julia was necessary in the carrying out of Livia's schemes.

A common sorrow had intensified the father's affection for Julia and her orphaned children. If Tiberius was to climb farther, it must be through Julia. As her husband and guardian of her sons, he could exercise the power of a regent, should Augustus die during the minority of Caius, and if, in the meantime, a son were born to Tiberius, and if by any chance the children of Agrippa should be removed, the desires of all would be concentrated in the indisputable birthright of this imagined grandchild.

Livia now regretted most sincerely the estrangement which she had allowed to spring up between Julia and herself. Self-reproach and sympathy appeared to intensify her devotion; but for a long time it seemed to Livia that Julia would die, and Julia herself hoped that she might.

She watched Livia stepping softly about her bed, and drank the medicine offered her praying that it would prove to be poison. Against her will life claimed her as its own. She knew to what fate she was drifting back as her father greeted her with fondest delight, and was not surprised when he informed her that Tiberius had divorced Vipsania, for she had foreseen every act in the pitiful drama as she lay thinking, thinking, but too weak to struggle against the inexorable current.

Antonius was far away, banished irrevocably by her own words. How well she recalled them,—" Even if we were free "—and he was not. There was Marcella—loving and trusting, bending over her now, raining her tears upon her face. Never, for the dear mother Octavia's sake, should she weep more bitterly.

Julia had known what must happen when she gave her promise to her dying husband, and she had no intention of breaking that

sacred vow. Agrippa must have foreseen it too, she argued, and Agrippa was always right.

She pitied her father from her heart; his loss was even greater than hers, which was so narrowly personal. He had said that he had two daughters, herself and the Empire. Both had been safe so long as Agrippa lived, but now that he had learned to lean upon that resourceful mind, so adequate to any emergency, he saw dangerous tendencies springing up among the younger generation, and only one man on whom he could rely to comprehend and sympathise with his policy of government and who possessed the static force of character to continue in the same lines the building up of the Roman Empire.

Augustus had once declared that he pitied Rome if it should ever come between the iron jaws of Tiberius, but he now felt, and patiently explained to Julia, that the time had come when it needed just such a masterful grip or the work which he himself had accomplished would disintegrate like a castle of sand.

Knowing its utter futility, Julia made one appeal: "Can you not make Tiberius your prime minister without marrying us?"

He silenced her. "It is the only way; believe me, it will be better for us all if you submit with a good grace. When, I ask you, did you begin to love Agrippa? Not surely before your marriage?"

"I think I had loved him long without knowing it," she replied. "I fled to him instinctively as to a strong tower of refuge and he did not fail me."

"You were a good wife, Julia. Be as true to Tiberius, and should he betray your trust, your father will not. Trust me, my child, and happiness which does not now seem to you possible will yet be yours."

There was no pretence of affection from the first; each knew that the other had been actuated by motives of policy, and the taunt would have sprung from Julia's lips upon her wedding-day but for a circumstance which touched her kindlier impulses.

She was driving with Tiberius, who sat with folded arms, gloomy and silent, when in a chariot which swiftly passed them, they caught a flying glimpse of Vipsania. One glance at her husband's face filled Julia's heart with a great pity, for there were tears in his eyes—and she knew that he, too, had suffered. Thenceforward and until she knew him more

thoroughly, a consideration which was more than tact led her to avoid reproach and recrimination. She believed, too, that she had conferred upon her children a faithful guardian, and had no conception of the desire for power which dominated her husband.

Her eyes were opened to her mistake as the little Agrippa grew older. Unlike his lovable brothers, he was quick-tempered, obstinate, and revengeful. Tiberius tried to break the child's will, but found it impossible. He was passionately attached to his mother, resenting his stepfather's cruelty to her, for Tiberius was brutal now.

On one occasion when she had attempted to reconcile them he had informed her that it was her business to give him a son and not to interfere with his discipline of her unmannerly cubs. Agrippa understood only that his mother had been insulted and flew upon her tormentor with tooth and nail. Tiberius carried his scratched face to Augustus, and the Emperor yielded to his demand that the intractable child should be banished to Planasia, a small island near Elba.

Augustus explained to Julia that this was merely temporary removal from an exciting environment, that if Agrippa proved not to

be incorrigible he should be permitted to return; but Julia was not deceived, her husband was not only grossly sensual, tyrannical, and cruel in relation to her, but her children were in his power and, sooner or later, that power would be exercised for their destruction.

There was trouble in Germany and Tiberius was sent to the field, a cause for rejoicing had not Caius, a lad of fourteen now, been sent with him to receive his education in military matters. Julia had read aright the look of cold malevolence in her husband's face.

"Caius is my hostage for your good behaviour," he had said at parting. "Let there be no public scandal."

Public scandal, which would grant him divorce, was precisely what he secretly desired. The longed-for heir that was to have united their warring interests had come and had died. There would never be another, for Augustus, hoping that a reconciliation might in time be effected, had yielded to Julia's demand for protection in a separate life, and Tiberius was her husband only in name.

She was alone, terribly alone in the midst of her enemies. Who would aid her in opening her father's eyes to her children's danger?

She sobbed forth the question before the

unpitying lares, and a high-pitched voice cried as in answer, "Antonius, Antonius."

It was the parrot dancing and shrieking in wild excitement, for he had recognised an old acquaintance approaching from the atrium.

"Did you call me, Julia? My consulship has expired, and I am here once more."

It was Antonius's very self who lifted her still weeping and comforted her as one comforts a grieved child.

III

CHRISTMAS AT ROME

It was the calm and silent night,
  Seven hundred years and fifty-three
Had Rome been growing up to might,
  And now was Queen of land and sea!
No sound was heard of clashing wars,
  Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars
  Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
    In the solemn midnight
      Centuries ago!

'T was in the calm and silent night!
  The senator of haughty Rome
Impatient urged his chariot's flight
  From lordly revel rolling home;
Triumphal arches gleaming swell

His breast with thoughts of boundless sway.
What recked the Roman what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight
Centuries ago?

ALFRED DOMETT.

It recked one Roman much, and he, the Emperor Augustus, had pondered long and reverently over the ambiguous oracle of Cumæ, and fervently he strove to aid in its fulfilment. But who could imagine that the babe foretold by the Sibyl as destined to sit where he was sitting, who would bring in the Golden Age, the Prince of Peace, whom the whole world longed for, "quem omnes expectabant," would be born in an utterly unknown village of an obscure province?

Only in the capital of the world and in the palace of the Cæsars should such a momentous event take place.

Augustus had no son, but at the time that Virgil voiced the prophecy, he had adopted Marcellus, the child of his dearly loved sister, Octavia, as his heir. The boy had inherited her winsome personality and beautiful character. Virgil himself believed him the predicted sovereign, and the Emperor to make

his succession sure had wedded him as we have seen to his only child.

Virgil and Tibullus had followed Marcellus to the grave—the Sibyl's utterances as interpreted by Messalinus were confused and unintelligible, and the faith of Augustus had faltered. He had married Julia to his best friend Agrippa from pure policy, but on the birth of Caius the old hope woke vaguely in his heart that possibly this grandson might be the expected babe, and he had bestowed upon him the name of his immortal uncle—Caius Julius Cæsar—at the same time creating him heir-apparent to the Empire.

The populace loved the boy, and at the festival given to celebrate the return of the Emperor from Gaul and that of Julia and Agrippa from the Orient, they had shouted forth their loyalty and admiration when the plucky princeling, then only seven years of age, had taken his place with the Roman Knights in the splendid tournament of the Trojan games.

Augustus had marked their enthusiasm and it had warmed his heart, which was centred more firmly upon the child than Julia knew. Antonius, who had now come to Julia directly from an interview with the Emperor, compre-

hended this and he calmed and soothed her with the assurance that she exaggerated her child's immediate danger. Tiberius would never dare to compass the death of Caius while Augustus lived.

"Listen, little sister," he said, "I know for a certainty that your father's only thought in sending the boy to the front under the care of Tiberius, was to prepare him for his high career. We must hasten his entrance upon it while the firm hand of Augustus still grasps the sceptre. Augustus must be persuaded to make Caius his colleague so that, should your father die suddenly, your son's accession would be predetermined and inevitable."

Julia laughed incredulously. "Do you suppose that Livia, that Tiberius would for a moment permit of such a step? And Caius, but a lad of fourteen, colleague of the Emperor! It is against all law, all precedent."

"New laws can be made and old ones changed by the Senate, and that shall be my concern. You said just now that your life was ended. A mother lives in her son. I had an example of that in Egypt. At the foot of the great Sphinx, I found one day some travellers utterly spent. A miserable little ass had crept into the shadow and was panting

piteously, its master had lain himself down to die; but a delicate woman sat wan but steadfast suckling her babe, though each drop which the infant drew tortured her parched veins. She smiled upon me as I held the water-bottle to her lips, but gently pushed it aside so that the water trickled into the mouth of the child. 'Drink first,' I pleaded, 'you are dying of thirst.'

"'Oh, no!' she answered, 'I shall not die, for I am necessary to him, and he is—The Hope of the World.'

"Sublime egotism!—she, a nomad woman, perishing in the desert, as confident in the future of her son as though he were a king, and as undismayed as to her own fate, as though she sat in his palace, attended by his courtiers,—because forsooth she was necessary to him. It was a lesson which I shall never forget. Julia, I, too, was perishing of thirst—for love—for you."

She shrank away from him, covering her face with her hands, murmuring: "Is that the price you ask for saving Caius?"

"Nay, you misunderstand me. You punished me once for such a thought and I shall not transgress again. You struck so hard that when I went to Egypt I went as I

thought to my death. But I had time to ponder, and when I found that a man does not die even of such a wound, I determined to make my love for you not a degradation but a thing sacred, the noblest impulse of my soul, a devotion which even your pure soul need not hesitate to accept; and since fate has forbidden me to ask you to lean upon me as you relied upon Agrippa, I would help you live your own life, lonely, if it must be so, yet nobly and with triumphant adequacy for every emergency."

She looked at him amazed, but could not doubt his sincerity. In the hour of his weakness she had been strong and now in her own collapse that strength had reacted through him to her,—with an added element, something mysterious and divine, intense and tender as love yet more uplifting, for it awakened within herself a moral force which she knew not that she possessed.

"Bless you Antonius," she said gratefully, "but my life is marred past all repair."

"That may be true of your own life, but there are your children. Think of what the woman said—the Hope of the World!"

Julia's face flashed into radiancy. "Truly you are right; but what can I do?"

"Much. A new political party has sprung up here in Rome, composed of the young radicals who revolt against the sternness and narrowness of the old régime. They stand for progress, for broader forms of civilisation, for toleration, for freedom of thought and speech, for mercy to the unfortunate and for punishment of the wicked which shall mean reformation, not retaliation of crime with crime. Julia, you have never seen a crucifixion. I have heard Tiberius say he thought it too light a penalty for rebellion. We dread his succession not because of his haughty insolence and his surly aloofness, but because we know that he will prove an unscrupulous and cruel tyrant.

"We must make Caius the popular leader of this opposition. They must acknowledge him as the hope of the future. You were the leader of society during the life of Agrippa; but they tell me that since your marriage to Tiberius you have retired from the world. Resume your old place and assume the conduct of the campaign which we must wage.. Open your house to the young nobility, enlist the men of genius in our ranks, and that Livia and your father may not suspect our motives give brilliant receptions to which it will be a

privilege to be asked with the avowed purpose of introducing some poet. Horace is in his dotage, and has retired to his Sabine farm. Bring forward Ovid. Let him read his *Metamorphoses,* a work of the first rank. He will be the rage—and so will you. Dress as Agrippa loved to see you,—as becomes the daughter and the mother of an Emperor,—and invite beautiful and distinguished women like Sulpicia, like my sister Antonia, and Marcia, the wife of Fabius Maximus, and my own Marcella to bear you company. Meantime, Augustus shall be persuaded to recall Caius and the Senate shall confer upon him the offices which his father held."

The *coup d'état* thus outlined by Antonius was rapidly and successfully carried through, the Senate passing a law whereby Caius was at once elected Consul of Asia, to enter upon his duties in his twenty-first year.

The news came as a thunderbolt to Livia and to Tiberius, who, hastily returning to Rome, found that the rival so audaciously thrust forward was backed by a following more powerful than his own. Deeply offended he shut himself up in his palace, threatening to starve himself to death if the appointment were not rescinded. Failing to

influence the Senate or the Emperor by this childish pique, he left Rome for his estates on the island of Rhodes.

Learning through his mother's letters how great had been his mistake in thus playing into the hands of his enemies by voluntarily exiling himself from the scene of contest, he wrote the Emperor, asking permission to return "in order to care for his family." Augustus replied indignantly that he had displayed little solicitude in deserting them, and might dismiss from his mind all anxiety in regard to their welfare.

And now the five years ordained by the Senate to intervene between the election of Caius and the assumption of his duties had expired and the happiest day of Julia's life had arrived. Caius was to set out for his province, where it was expected that he would perform glorious deeds, and all Rome swarmed to the forum to bellow their acclamations in that stupendous ear-shattering roar which could be poured forth by Roman throats alone.

His mother's heart ached for very joy as she heard it. With what pride she had fastened his toga-prætexta, whose purple stripe and Phrygian embroidery were the regalia of his office, with grateful reverence she had con-

tributed a white bull for sacrifice to the favouring gods, and her eyes had been wet with exquisite tears as she watched his elegant figure bearing itself with courtesy and grace through the exercises of the day. He was a bridegroom, having recently wedded Livilla, the beautiful daughter of Drusus and Antonia, against the will of her grandmother Livia, and Livia's opposition to the marriage had thrown the only cloud upon the joyous occasion.

Julia had held the hand of the girlish bride as Ovid mounted the Rostra to declaim the farewell ode to Caius. Fulsome flattery it seems to us, but the two loving women listened in credulous esctacy to its pompous periods.

Once more our Prince prepares to make us glad,
And the remaining East to Rome will add.
Rejoice ye Roman soldiers in your urn,
Your ensigns from the Parthians shall return,
A youth is sent those trophies to demand
Who bears his father's thunder in his hand.
Doubt not th' imperial boy in wars unseen;
In childhood all of Cæsar's race are men,
Thus infant Hercules the snakes did press,
And in his cradle did his sire confess,
Bacchus, a boy, yet like a hero fought,
And early spoils from conquered India brought.
Thus you your father's troops shall lead to fight,

And thus shall vanquish in your father's sight;
These rudiments you to your lineage owe;
Born to increase your titles as you grow.[1]

"Io triumphe!" reiterated the populace, and mother and son bade each other farewell with no premonition of the double tragedy lurking behind Livia's slow smile.

Lucius, Julia's second son, was not at this celebration, for he had been appointed to the command of the army in Spain, and was already upon his way. He had paused in southern Gaul (possibly to visit Nîmes, whose citizens had dedicated to Caius and himself the beautiful temple which we admire today under the name of the Maison Carrée). He never reached his destination, but died at Marseilles, from fever or poison, soon after the departure of his brother for the East.

Julia bore up bravely, for her heart was more intensely centred in her eldest son, and at first the letters received from him were most gratifying.

"Alma Mater," he wrote, in one, "I am thinking of you much of late, for we are in

[1] Dryden's translation. Augustus was no older when he assumed command of the army.

Jerusalem, where you and my father were the guests of Herod the Great. A wonderful but terrible man, if all that I hear be true. They tell me that the Jews must have heard in some way of the prophecy of the Cumæan Sibyl of the wonderful babe who will rule the world, and that certain Chaldean astrologers notified Herod that the hour was at hand, and that an insignificant village in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem was indicated by the appearance in the sky of the flaming prodigy which would announce the birth of the king. Herod promptly averted the danger of a popular uprising by a characteristic coup, putting to the sword all children who could pretend to a career so dangerous to the Roman rule.

"I was speaking lately of this event with Lollius, as we rode through an obscure town in the neighbourhood of the city which Herod in compliment to my grandfather has named Cæsarea.' A beautiful child of three or thereabouts chanced at the time to be playing with his comrades directly in our path. The sun so illumined his blond hair that at first glance it seemed to me that he wore a golden diadem. But in an instant I saw that this was no princeling, but a peasant boy, for he and his

playmates were amusing themselves by shaping birds from the mire of the road. I was so absorbed with our discussion, having just angrily asserted that the act of Herod, which Lollius defended as one of far-seeing policy, was that of a barbarous cutthroat, that I did not notice the child. He, too, was so wrapt in his play, bidding his clay birds with all seriousness to 'fly away,' that he would have been trampled under the hoofs of my horse, but for one of those strange events which the credulous call miracles. A flock of sparrows rose suddenly with a whirring of wings straight into my horse's face and eyes, causing the animal to swerve from his path, but not so widely as to release me from all uneasiness. I sprang from my saddle and lifted the boy in my arms to see if he were injured.

"'I should count myself as unforgivable as Herod,' I said, 'if I had caused anguish to the mother of such a child.'

"He looked at me very gravely. 'All mothers must suffer anguish,' he said, and as the strangeness of his words thrilled me, he continued sweetly: 'My mother would have forgiven you. Bid your mother when her time of anguish comes to forgive and she also shall be forgiven.'

"'That is an insolent message, Little One,' said Lollius. 'Know that you are speaking to a prince, the heir of Augustus Cæsar;—perchance in the naughtiness of your ignorant presumption, you have some message also for the Emperor.'

"'Bid him also to forgive,' the strange child replied calmly.

"Lollius laughed rudely. 'And for me have you the same command?'

"He turned from Lollius without a word, and looking at me, said, 'Forgive him.'

"We rode on but not before I had striven to learn something of this wonder-child, but all that the townspeople could tell me was that his father was a carpenter, and that the family were Jews who had recently returned to their own country from Egypt."

Caius's next letter brought news of greater public interest. He had met the king of Parthia on an island in the Euphrates, and had made conditions of peace obtaining the cession of Armenia to Rome. Augustus denominated the treaty a master-stroke of diplomacy, and the friends of Caius were jubilant, for he had fulfilled the prophecy of Ovid.

But the third letter received from Asia by Julia was written not by Caius, but by Lol-

lius, and reported that the young Consul, in taking possession of the citadel of Artapra, had been seriously wounded and had been borne to Limyra, a town of Asia Minor, for treatment of his wound.

It was not until after months of agonised suspense that Masgabas, a devoted follower of Caius, brought Julia the information that Caius had been treacherously stabbed in the back during the melée by some one in the Roman ranks. A rumour spread, started no one knew by whom, that Caius had discovered that Lollius had received vast sums from the king of Armenia for traitorously disclosing the Roman plans, and that Lollius himself had endeavoured to murder the prince to forestall his disgrace. But Masgabas, while admitting that this might be true, since Lollius had paraded gems of fabulous value which he had not the wealth to purchase, was convinced that a crime of still greater enormity had been committed. Caius had appeared to be recovering until he had placed himself under the care of a physician sent to him from Rhodes by Tiberius, when grave complications had set in and his life was now despaired of.

"I distrusted the apparently friendly overtures of Tiberius from the very first," said

Masgabas, "and begged my lord's permission to let me go to Rhodes and kill the beast, but he would on no account suffer me to do so. Nay more, when I bade him farewell as he lay dying, he told me of a vision which he had had of a child who commanded him to forgive his enemies. He charged me to beg Augustus to be reconciled with Tiberius and to allow him to return to Rome, and to entreat you also to forgive him."

"Forgive him!" exclaimed the heart-broken mother, "that will I never. My poor boy's mind was wandering. Carry not that message to my father."

"Alas! he wrote it with his own hand, and I was forced to deliver the letter," replied Masgabas, "but should the Emperor allow Tiberius to return, the moment that he touches foot to Italian soil, I will mete to him the same fate which he dealt my master."

This feeling was shared by many of the friends of the murdered prince and the deepest sympathy was expressed by all for Julia, who seemed to have lost her reason under the blow.

The hope of the future for which Antonius had taught her to live had been snatched away, and the bereft mother had not learned the

harder lesson of living without hope. She roamed the streets distracted, suspending wreaths upon the doors of the temple of Mars, beseeching the war-god to avenge her wrongs upon Rome.

Augustus, who was also in deep grief, had at first endeavoured to console her, but she had met his overtures with fierce and impolitic denunciation of Livia, who in defence made counter charges, that the younger nobles meeting at Julia's house had formed a conspiracy for the assassination of the Emperor, and that Iulus Antonius, who was Julia's lover, was the originator and head of the plot.

Augustus, indignant and incredulous, determined to probe the accusation to the uttermost and announced his determination of himself interrogating Julia in her own house, but unfortunately delayed action. Livia realised that she had gone too far to hesitate; Julia must be irretrievably ruined, or Tiberius could never return to Rome. She had two spies in Julia's household: Marcia, the wife of Fabius Maximus, who had been devoted to the unfortunate Caius. Marcia would know what went on in that household, and also through her husband what plots were being hatched. But Marcia could report nothing of an incriminating nature. The second spy was the

parrot. Here, also, Livia's hopes failed her, for its prattle was most unsatisfactory. But Livia was not disheartened. If no conspiracy existed, one could be simulated and Marcia was instructed to instruct the parrot.

Augustus visited his daughter's house in her absence, and interrogated her companion Marcia, and her devoted maid Phebe. The latter excitedly swore to the innocence of her mistress, but unfortunately endeavoured to prove too much, manifestly lying in her defence.

No man ever came to the house, not even Ovid, who was known to visit it daily. Marcia contradicted her at every point. Phebe denied that her mistress even spoke to Antonius; Marcia insisted that he was her lover, —and the parrot broke in upon the discussion, shrieking for Antonius and coupling his name with terms of passionate endearment.

Julia entered at that moment, and comprehending the situation without being able to exercise the self-control which it demanded, seized the parrot and wrung its neck before her father's eyes.

Struck to the heart by what seemed to him admission of her guilt, he commanded her to remain within her own house, and Marcia and

Phebe to keep silence until he should announce his verdict.

Julia was too mentally unstrung to obey. She wandered about the streets at night as usual, and the spies of the Emperor reported her demented ravings, stating that she had even mounted the Rostra and endeavoured to incite the populace to rebellion. Augustus himself verified the truth of this accusation. He saw her hang a garland upon the door of the temple of Mars, and as she turned from the steps, Iulus Antonius took her arm and gently but firmly led her to her own home, whence he presently issued in company with Ovid. The next night the same performance was repeated, with the difference that on this occasion Sempronius Gracchus interrupted her as she began an incoherent harangue, from the Rostra. Again Ovid was seen to leave her door, this time in company with Silanus; on another night it was Ovid himself who brought her back, and on still another, Antonius again met her as by appointment.

The Emperor had seen enough to condemn Julia; but two constructions, equally terrible to him, could be put upon these nightly assignations. Mars was not alone the god of war, he was also the lover of Venus and the patron of

illicit love. In placing trophies at his shrine, Julia was either shamelessly announcing her triumphs in this field or beseeching his assistance in the conspiracy for her father's assassination.

Ovid was arrested, brought before the Emperor, and sternly interrogated as to which of these explanations of Julia's conduct was the true one—no other alternative being admitted as possible. Struck with mortal terror, he yet denied the existence of any plot so persistently and with such apparent honesty that Augustus was convinced, but in refuting the charge of light conduct, Ovid was less successful. He explained his own regular visits by the fact that he was tutor to Julia's younger daughter. As to the attentions of the other men, they were her devoted friends, that was all.

Unfortunately other pretended witnesses brought forward by Livia were more precise, and Julia was branded by them as a profligate. Livia herself asserted that the explanation of the desertion of Tiberius was knowledge of crime which he could not pardon and which his consideration for the Emperor's feelings forbade him to make public.

She even declared that Julia's relations with Antonius had been long continued and dotingly

condoned by Agrippa. Even Ovid admitted that Agrippa had defended her on the occasion when she had been surprised with Antonius in the cave at Capri.

Augustus could doubt no longer. Antonius was instantly imprisoned, while the battle between duty and affection was fought in the anguished mind of the Emperor to its grim ending. He may not in earlier years have been possessed with the passion for righteousness which apparently ruled him now, but he realised that the only sure foundation for the Empire which he loved was the impartial administration of law. Inflexible justice was with him no hypocritical pretence but absolute conviction. He was caught in the inexorable toils of circumstance. As the conservator of public morals, he could not disobey the law which he himself had made which obliged the father to punish his guilty daughter when her husband refused to do so. For a time it seemed to him his duty to condemn his daughter to death, but the Senate interceded for her, and he softened his sentence to the announcement of her divorce and to banishment for life to the island of Pandataria. Sempronius Gracchus and others accused of having been her lovers fled;

some even committed suicide; others, including Masgabas, were executed. Ovid was banished to Tomi, a desolate settlement on the shores of the Black Sea.

Antonius, against whom Augustus was particularly incensed, was supposed by him to have been put to death, but a disquieting rumour, which Livia dared not communicate to her husband, reached her to the effect that Antonius had escaped on the eve of the day set for his execution. Livia had triumphed, but it needed an outbreak among the barbarians to effect the recall of Tiberius. Broken-hearted and aging, with the affairs of state pressing heavily upon him, Augustus held out against the importunities of his wife until danger threatened the Empire and the legions demanded their old commander.

"For the sake of Rome," he murmured, as he sealed the letter, and Livia's victory was complete.

IV

THE ISLE OF PEACE

Gaunt, giant cedars shoot their slender spires
By beetling crags sheer to the sapphire sky,
Reflected in the deeps' infinity

Like flaming embers of forgotten fires.
And as the opal glow of day expires
Over the shimmering sea of Italy
A spectre boat floats shoreward like a sigh,
Bearing its burden to the fatal pyres.

So, when life's smouldering sunlight fades away,
And melts in amethystine mystery,
To that charmed isle may I be gently borne
Where quiet is for ever and a day,
And naught awakes the echoes night and morn
But ceaseless singing of the restless sea.

FRÈRE CHAMPNEY.[1]

Twelve years passed by during which the mercurial Roman populace settled themselves to the old order of things. Tiberius was a good fighter and had fulfilled the expectations of his friends. Leaving Germanicus to placate the conquered country he returned to Rome, where he was apparently reconciled with Augustus. He had learned dissimulation in his long exile and his demeanour was altered for the better. No longer morose and insolent, he showed the Emperor such filial consideration that the latter felt that he had misunderstood his character and at last made him his heir.

Augustus realised that he had not long to

[1] See frontispiece.

live; he longed for strong hands to which to commit this adopted daughter of his, this Rome for which he had sacrificed so much. His heart had grown most tender, frequently tears were seen in his eyes—and those nearest would hear him murmur the names of Caius and Lucius. Often, too, an expression of more poignant pain would cross his face, and though he spoke no word it was evident that he was thinking of Julia. Among the courtiers there was one, Fabius Maximus, who had remained faithful to her, waiting in silence for a convenient season, which he now believed had arrived.

Tiberius was again to go to the front, for the Ostrogoths east of the Danube were uneasy. While he was away a final tentative might be made and Fabius pleaded with the Emperor for his youngest grandson, the banished Agrippa Posthumus. He told him that the hard discipline which the boy had undergone had made him repentant, obedient, and gentle, and he begged Augustus to see the lad.

He pleaded so eloquently that the Emperor, who was about to convey Tiberius to the fleet in his private yacht, consented to touch at Planasia on his return and judge for himself.

"Agrippa is still my heir," he said thoughtfully, "and may some day be called to the throne. I sometimes wonder, Fabius, if I have not been the victim of some terrible delusion, and the death of Antonius lies heavily upon my conscience. Marcella believes that he was faithful to her. I acted in anger and gave him no opportunity of disproving the charges made against him."

"He was innocent, Sire, of any wrong to you or your daughter," Fabius replied. "His only crime was that he was the enemy of Tiberius."

"Would that he could come back from the grave for one hour, and resolve my doubts!" Augustus exclaimed fervently.

"He will come if you call him," Fabius whispered. "He is not dead and has made Capri his refuge,—choosing it because it is near to Pandataria. Each day until Julia was removed to her prison on the Straits of Messina, he coasted the island, sending her messages and striving to effect her rescue. I am in communication with him by means of a system of torch signals flashed from the villa of Lucullus on the mainland to the Isle of Idleness in front of the villa of your sister, the lamented Octavia. Here is the code. It is

very simple—if you stop at Capri, you can meet him."

The Emperor seized the parchment eagerly; he was much moved. "I will act on your suggestion, and spend some days in Capri. Livia and Tiberius will be with me, but I shall find an opportunity to elude their vigilance."

There was a slight rustle, the swish of trailing feminine drapery upon the tessellated pavement, and Livia stood before them. She had overheard only her husband's announcement of his intention to visit Capri. Possibly he had forgotten and Fabius did not know that Julia had been removed from the island of Pandataria to the strong fortress of Scilla at Rhegium. Whatever the scheme on foot, she would soon be informed, for Marcia, the wife of Fabius, was her spy.

Marcia could tell her only that Fabius had confided to her that there was some scheme on foot to carry the boy Agrippa to Germany and confide him to the guardianship of the legions, but this was enough, and Fabius died suddenly the day following the departure of Augustus from Rome, Marcia, in the first unguarded transports of her grief, crying out that she had unwittingly caused his death.

Meanwhile the Emperor's yacht glided gracefully between the Faraglioni pinnacles and the mainland and anchored beneath the villa on the Punta Tragara.

It was years since Augustus had visited Capri, and the island was associated with his happiest memories. The young Capriotes received him with a joyous demonstration, celebrating his coming with athletic games, at which the Emperor generously distributed prizes. He gave orders also that a banquet should be served upon the terrace of the villa for the islanders who had so honoured him, and graciously laying aside etiquette he chatted familiarly with his guests. Long after they had trooped joyously away and the sound of their singing had died in the distance, he sat with Livia and Tiberius upon the terrace, watching the lights come out upon the opposite shore in answer to the star-signals in the quiet sky.

Suddenly the attention of the little group was attracted by a pyrotechnical display on the little island at their feet. Some one was skilfully tossing torches into the air, catching them, whirling and tossing them again. So great was the juggler's expertness in this species of sleight of hand that torch after torch

joined the fiery dance,—five—six—seven, the Emperor counted, and then they intermingled with such dazzling rapidity, raining such a coruscation of sparks, that he lost his count and watched the human centre of this swirling vortex of meteors with admiration and astonishment.

"It was there on that little Isle of Idleness," he said musingly, "that Masgabas was wont to spear fish by torchlight. But Masgabas, they say, is dead."

"Dead and buried in what was once his wine-cellar on his loved island," said Thrasyllus, the astronomer, who had left his lighthouse to call upon them. "You can discern the entrance to his tomb [1] illuminated by the torchlight. The Greek youths to honour his memory frequently play with torches in front of it. They say that in answer to that invocation a phantom boat is sometimes seen to approach the island and disappear. And when this occurs, some friend of Masgabas, who lolled with him in the shade of the cypresses

[1] This tomb and an ancient staircase cut in the rock still exist upon the islet, but the terrace and its cypresses have disappeared, for the entire island of Capri and its neighbouring rocks have sunken some seventy feet since the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius—submerging the ruins of many of the villas of that day.

in the old days, while a slave brought a jar of Falernian from the cave,—some such boon-companion, be he never so far away, is sure to join him within three days at the banquet of the dead."

As he spoke, Tiberius caught the Emperor's arm. "It is there, now, I see it! the boat, the boat!"

All looked in the direction in which Tiberius pointed, and distinctly saw a small skiff propelled by a single oarsman illumined in the glare,—and, standing in the bow, a tall figure robed in white. An instant later it had vanished, utterly swallowed up by the shadows.

Augustus called for his tablets, but he was no poet, and, ashamed to acknowledge the authorship of the lines which he tossed to Thrasyllus, he pretended that he had read them in the works of some Greek author whose name he could not recollect.

Thrasyllus read the fragment aloud:

"They glitter bright
With radiant light,
The gates we dread to pass.
With torch and song
We follow on
To join thee, Masgabas."

The applause was faint-hearted, for a vague uneasiness had fallen upon the little company.

"Is it an omen of death?" Tiberius asked of Thrasyllus.

"I have said," the other replied, "and it is the death of one of the great ones of earth. Possibly the Emperor. Come with me to my observatory and I will consult the stars, for your life also is menaced."

They waited until Augustus retired. He had ordered a couch placed on the terrace, for the night was sultry, and when they stole away he was sleeping peacefully.

Presently he stirred and spoke confusedly. He was dreaming of the old days when his sister, Octavia, presided in this villa, filling it with love and joy.

The children were here again, he could hear their shouts as they clambered about the cliffs, Julia's laughter wildest of all. She was dancing on the marble balustrade, the rampart of the terrace; and the boy Antonius was beating time with his hands, recklessly urging her on.

As usual in dreams, Augustus tried to speak, but could not at first warn Julia of her danger. Faster, faster she danced and nearer to the verge, till Augustus in his agony

cried aloud, "Save her—Antonius, Antonius, save Julia!"

"I am here," replied the voice of Antonius at his side, "but it is only you, Sire, who can save Julia."

The Emperor sat up thoroughly awakened, and stretched out his arms to Antonius, who knelt before him. "I have had you summoned not to punish you," he said, "but to know more of this miserable business. Tell me the truth, Antonius, is my daughter as wicked as they tell me?"

"She is innocent, I swear it by all the gods."

Augustus shook his head sadly. "But can you prove it, Antonius, by other testimony than your own?"

"I can. Recall Ovid and he will explain his statement on which she was condemned. We were endeavouring to collect testimony which would fix the responsibility of the murders of Caius and Lucius, and were too successful. Persons in high authority were implicated. The proofs were to have been immediately laid before a special court of inquiry, when a spy reported our proceedings and Ovid was arrested. It seemed to him that it was a lighter crime to be admirers of Julia's than conspirators and he so ex-

plained our secret visits to her house. It was a fatal mistake; we could make no countercharge, for our proofs had been stolen and were in the hands of our enemies, who were overjoyed to have a pretext for our ruin which would leave the true question at issue unprobed."

All the pent-up longing in the father's heart rose with a mighty impulse and overwhelmed his doubts, his stern ideas of justice, and his dread of consequences. "I do not ask you whom you suspect," he replied; "until you can gather new proofs 't is idle to accuse. It is enough for me to believe that Julia is not the vile creature I believed. I must see her. Oh, my girl, my girl!"

"Yes, you must see her, and looking into her clear eyes you will know how you have wronged her," exclaimed Antonius.

The Emperor pondered deeply. "Listen, Antonius," he said. "I am an old man, nearing the term of life. What I have to do I must do quickly. I have purposed vaguely to pardon Julia at some future day, when she should have expiated her fault. But if your statements can be proven, she will stand vindicated, and it is I who must be forgiven. I will accompany Tiberius as we planned to

Benevento, where he takes leave of me to sail to Illyricum. From Benevento I will send Livia to Rome by land, and will then sail directly to Rhegium—and take Julia home, —touching here for you and at Planasia for Agrippa."

"And then?"

"I will show that I am still Emperor of Rome."

Antonius sank upon his kness, and poured forth his gratitude. "Your clemency has been shown in time to save me from a fatal mistake," he confessed. "I had perfected my arrangements to rescue Julia from the castle of Scilla. The guards are bribed, and the ship which you see in the offing was to have taken me on board at daybreak. I should have carried her to Egypt, where we would have vanished for ever from the sight of the world."

Augustus smiled benignly. "I cannot blame you," he said, "but there is a better future before you both than that."

There was a slight sound as of whispering in the interior of the villa, and Antonius dropped behind the parapet. It was Tiberius, who had returned from his star-gazing with Thrasyllus. "He says that the Emperor or

I will surely die, within three days," he muttered.

"Hush!" Livia replied. "I also have grave news. Antonius has been here and Augustus has promised to reinstate Julia."

"Impossible! Then, indeed, I am ruined."

"He has but this moment left. Alarm the guards, they may even now apprehend him."

But Antonius had disappeared, and when Livia stole upon the terrace, her husband greeted her with a happier smile than she had seen upon his face for years.

"I feared your sleep might have been disturbed," she said; "some one has been prowling about the villa during the night."

"One of the young islanders doubtless, who drank too much of our good wine."

"Tiberius fears it may have been an assassin; but be reassured, he will be caught, the blood-hounds have been placed on the scent."

Augustus turned quickly and looked toward the Isle of Idleness. A skiff was leaving the shore, and a man seated in the stern waved his hand. Augustus returned the salute.

"How loyal these Capriote fishermen are!" he said smilingly. "Tiberius is groundlessly suspicious. Let the search be discontinued."

He called for food and Livia brought him

fruit, figs which she had that morning plucked in the villa garden, of which she partook with him, peeling them with a little silver knife, the blade poisoned—so, long after, the sinister rumour ran—upon one side only. Shortly after this the party left for Neapolis, and Capri saw its sovereign no more.

Nor did Antonius, though he watched each night from the Sirens' cave for the return of the Emperor's yacht. Instead the torch signals of the successor of Masgabas conveyed to him the tremendous news of the sudden death of Augustus.

He had been taken violently ill at Neapolis and had been conveyed to Nola, where he had passed away attended devotedly by Livia. Tiberius had been recalled in time for a long interview, after which the Emperor had faced his death with cheerful confidence.

"The drama is ended," he murmured; "have I not well performed my part? The heavy folded curtain has descended and far away and faint sounds the applause."

None can tell what commands the dying Emperor left for his successor to execute; but if he fancied that the last act in his life drama was one of reparation, he was sadly deceived. There was no mercy in the iron heart of

Tiberius. While the pompous funeral procession proceeded slowly toward Rome, an executioner on his way to Planasia outstripped it, and the boy Agrippa, strangled for no crime but that of birth, was buried in that lonely isle on the same day with his imperial grandfather.

Death came more slowly and in a more terrible form to Julia. From the castle of Scilla all other dwellers were removed and the doors walled. The guards had been changed and the barbarous Scythians who paced the outer defences heard piteous cries for days, and from a grated window, high in the grim dungeon, whose foundations still frown from the cliff, white hands were waved seaward to a bark, which flitted close to the shore unmindful of the whirlpool of Charybdis. An onslaught was made one night, but after fierce fighting the sentries drove away the rescuing party. Then more days, during which the bark flitted in the offing, and the cries ceased, for Julia had died of starvation.

History tells how Tiberius improved the great opportunity which fate, or his mother's crimes, had given him. There was no need of further hypocritical pretence; in lust, in drunkenness, and cruelty, he fulfilled his bestial

THE VILLA OF TIBERIUS AT CAPRI
From a reconstruction by C. Weichardt

nature. But the constant fear of assassination gave his coward soul no rest. Rome would suffer much but not everything. He could think of no safer fortress from the vengeance of an outraged populace than Capri; and on the almost inaccessible headland at its north-eastern extremity beside the great lighthouse, he built the palace whose fortifications and barracks, whose long suites, ante-chambers, and guard-rooms, labyrinthine corridors, subterranean passages, and secret exits tell the story of his constant fear.

Abandoning Livia to die of his ingratitude and Rome to the mismanagement of deputies, he fortified himself here for the last ten years of his life, making them one long orgy of cruelty and debauchery. And one evening, the visitor whom he had expected came.

Tiberius was standing on the platform of the lighthouse with Thrasyllus, waiting for darkness and the appearance of the stars. As his apprehensive glance swept the shore of the island, it was attracted by a light in front of the tomb of Masgabas. A boat was approaching the islet, and the Emperor caught the arm of his companion, who directed his glass in that direction. "A woman is standing in the entrance of the tomb," said the astronomer;

" she is extending her arms as though in welcome toward the approaching boat. One might almost fancy that she is singing, but she is too far away for her song to reach us."

As they strained their ears, another dull sound, as of knocking, was distinctly heard by each. It seemed to come from the earth beneath, and the faces of the listeners were grey with superstitious dread, when suddenly the door of the staircase leading to the Sirens' cave was flung violently open.

Tiberius had not forgotten this passage and had ordered it filled with earth. It had taken Antonius many months to re-excavate it, but he had accomplished the task at last. He had not expected to find himself immediately in the presence of the man he sought, but he made a sudden rush, only to be tripped by Thrasyllus and pinned to the floor by the giant wrestler who was the Emperor's inseparable bodyguard.

" Call the torturers," cried the terrified Emperor, " and when they have done their worst, throw him over the cliff."

In the confusion that ensued, Antonius wrenched himself from his captors and dashed back to the cave which had been his hiding-place, and latterly had also been his prison.

For many days past the sea beneath had been patrolled by soldiers in boats, while workmen had obliterated the path which led from the shore to the cave, rendering the already almost perpendicular cliff absolutely unscalable. Even if revenge had not driven Antonius from his retreat, hunger would soon have done so for the gulls' eggs upon which he had subsisted were now exhausted.

The soldiers hesitated for a little space to follow him, and standing in the open entrance to the cave-temple he looked down the sheer face of the precipice upon the sentries. They were evidently being signalled from the palace, for they were looking upward, but presently they caught sight of him and gesticulated excitedly. He heard a trampling upon the staircase—the only alternative was death by torture; then, while he hesitated, the air seemed filled with singing:

"Come Love, from sorrow and from struggle cease,
One refuge fails not—'t is the Isle of Peace."

Yes, there were torches waving yonder and white hands fluttering as he had seen them from the dungeon of Scilla—he lifted his arms high and leapt.

With clubs and oars they beat the semblance of humanity from the white face that rose to the surface. The inrushing tide caught the mangled form and swept it into the whirlpool. Round and round three times it swirled, then disappeared, sucked down, a reddish stain lingering for an instant, then washed away by a new influx of frothing breakers. Again the sound of distant singing was borne shoreward by the wind. "It is the song of the Sirens," said Thrasyllus; "they have claimed their own."

CHAPTER III

THE LOVES OF HORACE

THEY glide through his odes, a charming sisterhood: Cinara, Lyce, Næera, Bariné, Lydia, Chloë, Glycera, Phidyle, and Phyllis; "whose liquid and beautiful names are almost poems in themselves." Like a procession of Nereids, their fair faces appear for an instant and vanish on the rhythmic swell of the perfect verse of Horace.

So faultless is his artistry, so restrained within the limits of good taste, except in rare instances, is each contrasting emotion, that the conviction cannot be dispelled that our poet is merely romancing,—this is the glamour of imagination depicted with exquisite literary skill, not the expression of deep and genuine feeling. Some of the poems are addressed to women prominent in Rome, but in these the

love professed is evidently mere compliment and persiflage. In others the sentiment rings true while the personality is vague,—the poet is dreaming of an elusive ideal. In still others there is displayed a facility and an artificiality which stamps them as the product of the successful author turned out by the volume to fill the orders of an applauding public and of publishers who outbid each other for the privilege of supplying the demand.

It is no proof of the actual existence of all the ladies who figure as the heroines of the odes that Horace purports in the series to reveal his own heart history. To have passed through such numerous experiences, he must have been a veritable Don Juan, and not the frugal, moderate, immensely industrious, and, above all, kindly-hearted gentleman that we know him to have been. We remember, too, that he wrote:

> That man I hold true master of his art
> Who with *fictitious* woes can wring my heart,

and are not overcredulous.

If we are to believe the pretended confessions, the impulsive and indiscriminating affections of the poet rose on the swell of each

impression as promptly as a seaworthy little craft responds to familiar billows—but if so these agitations were no meaningless sea-saw. At the close of his adventurous voyage, his heart found quiet harbourage in a port of true-love not unlike the one from which he set sail; —for in Phyllis, "of all my loves the last," he reverts to a reincarnation of Cinara, his first love, who died in early youth.

Whether we look upon the odes as pure fiction or sober autobiography, we shall learn much from their study, for here are the ideals of the most cultured mind of the Augustan age, ideals formed by acquaintance with the women with whom we have for a brief space been living in imagination, from Octavia and Livia, from Julia and Sulpicia, depicted not alone with witching charm, but with the realism which is never lacking from consummate art.

The most sceptical of critics must admit that two of the poet's portraits are studies from life —Cinara and Lyce are not fictitious characters. Each in her different way made upon Horace an ineffaceable impression which coloured permanently his view of life.

Few real lives have so consistent a plot. Most straggle confusedly with no worthy pur-

pose or obviously satisfactory ending. The poems of Horace form an ordered composition whose plan is so skilfully concealed as not to be immediately evident. The character of the hero develops through his susceptibility with a unified progression, recoiling only to advance like the foliated convolutions of some antique moulding.

But it is to be noticed that each sweetheart, however she may differ in minor respects, is an exemplar of one of two types, the seductive enchantress, whose love is death, or the good angel,—that, in fact, Lyce and Cinara reappear under many disguises and names, and that despite his boasted connoisseurship, Horace never really knew more than two women.

Of Cinara Sir Theodore Martin says: "If Horace ever had a feeling which deserved the name of love it was for Cinara." When he was past fifty he recalls in a letter to Mæcenas:

> The woes blabbed o'er our wine when Cinara chose
> To tease me, cruel flirt, oh, happy woes!

Though courted by the wealthy and eager for luxury, he assures us that he was beloved by Cinara, "for his own simple sake."

"Few years the fates to Cinara allowed" ("Cinaræ brevis annos fata dederunt"). Had she lived the whole trend of his life might have been different and the odes, if indeed they are a true transcript of his experiences, would never have been written. We wish we could believe that it was after her early death that he was initiated into the darker phases of love by Lyce,

> Who breathing Love's own air
> Me of myself bereft,
> Who reigned in Cinara's stead, a fair, fair face,
> Queen of sweet arts.

Lyce was a lady of wealth and position. Horace mentions her

> Coan silks and jewels bright as stars.

He reproaches her playfully for allowing him to serenade her in vain one stormy night. Horace is sophisticated now and we discern beneath the fluent elegance of the practised writer and the flippant wit of the man of the world a tragic trifling with edged tools:

To Lyce

> Pity sweet Lyce the poor shivering bard
> Who serenades thee in the sleety rain.

Sure no barbarian maid has heart so hard,
Or treats her lover with such cold disdain.

Hark, how the wind pipes high and moaneth low,
And shrill respond the hinges of thy gate,
See how the cedars curtsey 'neath the snow
And thou alone art proud and obdurate.

As bleak your villa as an Alpine chalet
Where all in vain I sing and sigh and quake,
For though your lord forsakes you for the ballet
You still are heartless as a Moorish snake.

And yet I ween some day you 'll wish to marry,
Though long, long hence you 'll find me waiting still—
Unless, you foolish prude, too long you tarry
And rheumatism should your lover kill!

The fascination of married ladies over men younger than themselves is apt to be brief—and it is to the same Lyce that Horace addresses the bitter lampoon beginning:

Yes, Lyce, age now claims you for her own,
Though still you struggle to look young and fair
And ape in song and dance love's dreamy air;
Your voice has lost its erstwhile tender tone,
The luring beauty now has wholly flown
From eyes once lustrous as your jewels are;
As in a net you bound me with your hair,
Though loved by Cinara for myself alone.

The last stanza shows that the feeling which prompted this tirade was not altogether ignoble. He holds Lyce responsible for the inconstancy which broke the heart of the loving girl whose death has awakened him to remorse:

For passion of my reason so made theft
That for your favour I my honour sold.
But when the world of Cinara was bereft
My heart returned to its allegiance old,
And though the fates decree that you are left
Love's flame is quenched and all its ashes cold.

Shortly after his awakening from his infatuation for Madam Lyce, while Horace believed himself incapable of loving again, he met the incomparable Lydia,—the toast of the young bloods of Rome, the most admired of all the belles among its aristocratic society.

The first ode addressed to her was in remonstrance for her cruelty to, and probably at the instance of, his friend, the accomplished knight Sybaris, formerly pre-eminent in all athletic sports, but now imagined to be dying for love of her. It is a patent example of the *vers de société,* the graceful banter of which Austin Dobson is a past master, and the fol-

lowing parody is hardly more than a modernisation of its badinage:

Why Lydia, why, you saucy minx,
Doth Sybaris shun the golfing links?
He whom at polo none could tire,
All manly sports his heart's desire,
Now from a racing auto shrinks,
And ne'er appears at skating-rinks,
Or poker plays, or smokes or drinks,
Or takes on aeroplane a flyer—
Why, Lydia, why?

Erst Lord of Revels and High Jinks,
He who was one of fashion's pinks,
Why flaunts he not in gay attire
Nor plays the races? We admire
The chorus-girls—he lonely slinks.
Why Lydia, Why?

The poet's pleading was irresistible—like that of John Alden it gained the heart of the cruel beauty, not for his friend, but for himself.

But Lydia throws Horace over for the handsome Calais, and the poet attempts to awaken her jealousy by a pretence of love-making to the pretty, childish Chloë, who flees him like a timid fawn and whose simplicity he playfully rallies. Eugene Field has well pre-

served the banter of this mock courtship in his translation:

But Chloë, you 're no infant thing
That should esteem a man an ogre,
Let go your mother's apron-string,
And pin your faith upon a toga.
A mother's solace may be sweet
But Hymen's tenderness is sweeter,
And though all manly love is meet,
You 'll find the poet's love is metre.

One sees that even so inexperienced a girl as Chloë, if indeed she really existed, must have comprehended that this was mere fun and fooling, while the famous reconciliation dialogue is manifestly a little comedy to be sung and acted at some fashionable fête, possibly by the principals themselves.

The Reconciliation

HORACE

While on thy snowy breast I happy lie,
And thy soft arms about me gently twine,
My love, my Lydia, Persia's empery
Seems not so dear as that sweet smile of thine.

LYDIA

While in thy heart no other love did flame,
Nor after Chloë Lydia didst thou prize,

Thy verse re-echoing only Lydia's fame
Raised it, like Ilia's, to the highest skies.

HORACE

Now Thracian Chloë holds me in a spell,
Enthralled by such bewitching melody
Of lyre and voice, my life I 'd gladly sell
If fate my better self would spare to me.

LYDIA

And I to Ornyth's son am just as dear,
He loves me more than all the world, and I
To save his life not Atropos would fear,
For his dear sake a double death I 'd die.

HORACE

What if the old-time love once more awake,
And bind me captive with its golden chain?
If Chloë's amber braids I now forsake
May I thy dusky tresses kiss again?

LYDIA

Though he be fairer than the evening star,
Thou rougher than the Adriatic Sea—
Inconstant as its fickle surges are—
Happy I 'd live—thrice happy die for thee!

We find still another ode addressed to the coquette, which sounds the note of a short-lived jealousy:

> Lydia, when you tauntingly
> Talk of Telepheus, praising him
> For his beauty vauntingly,
> Far beyond me raising him,
> His rosy neck and arms of alabaster,
> My rage I scarce can master.[1]

With this reproach Lydia vanishes and Bariné, who is only an intensified Lyce, must be next considered. Bariné is the acknowledged queen of the Greek hetæræ, the demi-monde who dashed down the Via Appia in light chariots, lashing the hearts of better women than themselves with each fillip of their slender whips.

Wealthy fathers and devoted mothers—so Horace writes—dreaded her influence over their wild sons:

> While brides, new-wedded, feared the charms
> That kept their husbands from their arms.

She was a real personage, Lord Lytton is positive, "whom Horace addresses in a tone

[1] Francis Mahony ("Father Prout").

which to such a woman would have been the most exquisite flattery." But we are relieved to learn that the poet who so addresses her is a clear-headed observer, and not her lover:

If for thy perjuries and broken truth,
Bariné, thou hadst ever come to harm,
Hadst lost but in a nail or blackened tooth
One single charm,

I 'd trust thee; but when thou art most forsworn,
Thou blazest forth with beauty most supreme,
And of our young men art, noon, night, and morn,
The thought, the dream.[1]

Glycera, the Nemesis of Tibullus (whose acquaintance we have already made in our first chapter), was another dangerous woman, whose fascination Horace admits that he did not entirely escape, but the wounds made by her eyes were by no means incurable, and we share the satisfaction with which he turns to Phyllis, his "very last of loves."

Here, says Martin, we have the true Horace, and after all these doubtful ladies it is pleasant to come across a young beauty like this Phyllis,

sic fidelem, sic lucro aversam,

a fragrant violet among the languorous hot-house splendours of the Horatian garden.

[1] Sir Theodore Martin.

She was a Thracian singer, a slave bought in some Grecian mart by his friend Xanthias, who fell in love with her, but hesitated to marry her, for marriage with the Romans was as serious a matter as with us, and family and social position were of prime consideration.

Horace writes to his friend with the laudable desire of encouraging him to honourable wedlock. He urges that, though a slave, a girl of such rare character must be of noble birth and worthy the love of any man, whatever his rank.

Blush not my friend Xanthias of true-love ashamed
That 't is but a handmaid who makes thee so blest,
The captive Briseis Achilles inflamed,
And bound him a slave to her marble-white breast.

And could we discover her family-tree,
I doubt not Greek heroes and kings we should find,
While the mother of Phyllis must certainly be
As fair as her daughter, and just as refined.

Her form like a statue, her ankles so trim
A connoisseur's eyes cannot choose but admire.
Don't be jealous, dear fellow, my sight's growing dim,
Though my taste 's still correct, age protects from love's fire.

As in his previous interference in behalf of his friend Sybaris, his action has an unexpected result. Xanthias evidently comprehends that Horace is more deeply interested than he himself realises, perhaps that Phyllis returns his affection; and instead of marrying his handmaiden, he must self-sacrificingly free her and allow the course of true love to take its own sweet way.

That Horace followed the course which he marked out for his friend and married Phyllis, we would love to believe, though no record of the contract has come down to us. Instead we have only his delightful invitation to her to celebrate with him the birthday of Mæcenas at his Sabine farm, with a hint that the handsome lady-killer, Telepheus, had again crossed his path.

In all probability "the proud and wealthy maid" to whom he refers is the fickle Lydia.

To Phyllis

A cask of Alban wine
Mellowed by winters nine,
Fresh parsley too and sprays of ivy green
My gardeners prepare,
With violets shy and fair

Which 'mid thy amber tresses should be seen,—
Sweet Phyllis, swiftly come and be my queen.

My walls with silver shine
And vervain [1] wreathes the shrine
Where waits the sacrifice, a yearling sheep.
The house swarms like a hive
With servitors alive,
While on the hearth the lambent flame doth leap.
Dear Phyllis, come with me and revel keep.

Time now is at the Ides
Which this fair month divides;
Young April, dear to Venus ocean-born,
My natal day I prize
Less than its smiling skies,
For my Mæcenas claims this happy morn.
Fair Phyllis, do not leave me all forlorn.

For Telepheus you sigh,
A lad of lineage high,
Enamoured of a proud and wealthy maid.
Put that ambition by
And dry your charming eye,

[1] Vervain was supposed to conduce to merriment. Fletcher alludes to this ancient Italian superstition in his *Faithful Shepherdess:*

"And thou light vervain too, thou must go after,
Provoking easy souls to mirth and laughter.
No more shall I dip thee in water now
And sprinkle every post and every bough
With thy well-pleasing juice to make the gnomes
Swell with huge mirth, and with joy all the rooms."

Forget the falseness of that fickle blade.
Fond Phyllis, come unto my Sabine glade.

Remember Phaeton,
And rash Bellerophon
Whose winged steed to Heaven would soar elate.
O heed my warning kind,
Be modest in your mind,
And seek a lover of your own estate,—
Sweet Phyllis, am not I a fitter mate?

Of loves you are my last,
All lesser passions past,
For thee alone my constant heart doth long.
Such pleasure never cloys,
So let thy matchless voice,
Whose subtle sweetness charms the listening throng,
Dear Phyllis, lend its magic to my song.

Whatever may be our opinion as to the autobiographical value of the odes, we must concede that, as a suite, they have a conscious or unconscious unity in their variety, a progression in spirals toward a definite end. Every music-lover must remember a parallel composition in the development of the warring themes which strive in Mendelssohn's Symphony in A major. The clarinets introduce the first theme in an exquisite melody breathing all the freshness and fragrance of the woods. But this melody, though recurring again and again, is

constantly overpowered by the second theme as rendered by the delirious violins and the tumultuous brass.

Do not the odes of Horace interpret this strife as the eternal conflict between sacred and profane love?

Like the liquid tones of a clarinet,
Or the piping of Pan in groves of pine,
Was the song of Love when first I met
My Cinara, sweet as a clinging vine.
Yet lost was that melody pure and fine,
Drowned in the clamour of cymbals and lyre,
When passionate Lyce's eyes met mine,
For the mad blood leapt in my veins like fire.

Soon that phrensy passed, and the clarinet
Brought woe to my heart, to my eyes the brine.
But vain the repentance and vain regret,
Vain the garlands hung at a dead love's shrine,
For hearts that are young cannot always pine,
Barine danced to the cymbals and lyre
And grief was forgotten in music and wine,
While the mad blood leapt in my veins like fire.

Then Glycera's glances, the frail coquette,
And Lydia's kisses and wiles were mine.
With Chloë sweet as a violet,
Næera, with tresses that tangle and twine,
For my loves like the muses numbered nine.
They dance in time to the throb of the lyre

And the clang of the cymbals with eyes that shine,
  And the mad blood leaps in my veins like fire.

Gladdened, not maddened, it dances yet,
  Calmed by a flute from a grove of pine,
For my lost first-love in Phyllis I met,
  Who sings my songs with a voice divine.
Yes, I am content in my vale Sabine,
  Though I see when I hear the swell of the lyre
Phantoms that mingle and intertwine
  And the mad blood leaps in my veins like fire.

Horace rounds the cycle of his loves very charmingly, but for all his protestations we do not believe in the seriousness of such multifarious emotions. He is a typical confirmed bachelor,—though he professes to covet the *placens uxor* (winsome wife) who

  The cheerful home with sweet young blossoms fills—
Of some stout Sabine, or the sunburned bride
  Of the lithe peasant of the Apulian hills,
Who piles the hearth with logs well dried and old
  Against the coming of her wearied lord;
And when at eve the cattle seek the fold
  Drains their full udders of the milky hoard;
And bringing forth from her well-tended store
  A jar of wine, the vintage of the year,
Spreads an unpurchased feast,—oh! then not more
  Could choicest Lucrine oysters give me cheer.[1]

[1] Martin's translation.

But he is well content with his oysters and his memories. Professor Tyrrell happily says that he knows of no poem in English, not professedly an imitation, more Horatian in tone than Thackeray's *Age of Wisdom:*

Forty times over let Michaelmas pass,
Grizzling hair the brain doth clear,
Then you know a boy is an ass,
Then you know the worth of a lass,
Once you have come to forty year.

Gillian 's dead—God rest her bier,
How I loved her twenty years syne!
Marian 's married, but I sit here
Alone and merry at forty year,
Dipping my nose in the Gascon wine.

We must agree that while Horace appreciated the grace and fascination of women, "his whole being had never been penetrated by the genuine fire of love. We seek in his ditties in vain for the tenderness, the negation of self, the passion, and the pathos which are the soul of all true love poetry." To feel this vividly, we have but to compare his jocund muse with the passionate utterances in which "Catullus has struck those terrible chords which have given us the very vibration

of his heart," in that marvellous series of poems which depicts the story of his love for Lesbia.

Neither the love nor the genius of Horace ever escaped the control of his reason, while that of Catullus quivered on the borderland of insanity. Temperamentally, Swinburne recognises in him his prototype:

My brother, my Valerius, dearest head
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read
My brother.

No dust that death or time can strew may smother
Love and the sense of kinship only bred
From loves and hates at one with one another.

Tibullus, Sulpicia, Ovid, all owed an immense debt to Catullus, but Horace is in every respect his absolute contrast. And yet, though our poet probably never felt the grand passion, he has shown himself in such imaginative poems as the ode to Hypermnestra capable of depicting an intenser love and a noble type of womanhood than any which came within his personal experience. In his poem to Cleopatra, also, he shows an appreciation of the pathos as well as the tragedy of her fate, and a sympathy for an unpopular woman which,

flaunted as it was in the very face of Augustus, betokens a rare chivalry and independence of character.

The Death of Cleopatra

As with unerring flight a falcon swift
  Swoops down upon a poor defenceless dove,—
Or as the huntsman scales the snowy drift
  And tracks the stag to his retreat above,
So with relentless fury Cæsar came,
  Driving from port to port in doubt and fear
With overwhelming force and lurid flame
  His fluttering prey, who knew her end was near.
No refuge sought she on some foreign shore,
  Or shunned her doom, 't was better thus to die
In her own realm, her fathers' gods before,
  Than like a tigress in Rome's cage to lie.
Mid dim deserted halls alone she stood
  And to the aspic gave her royal blood,
Better deliberate death than Roman scorn,
  To die a Queen than live a slave forlorn.[1]

His friendships with men, especially with Mæcenas, and his love for his brother poets, might well form the theme of another, and a more satisfying chapter. Of Iulus Antonius, of whose poems we knew only through the enumeration which Horace gives us, he writes:

[1] Translated by Frère Champney.

Worthy Apollo's laurel wreath,
Whether he strike the lyre
To love and young desire,
While bold and lawless numbers grow beneath
His mastering touch of fire.

Appreciative of his peers and generous to would-be rivals, his wit had no sting; he was essentially a man's man, the most clubable of good fellows, and his character ripened like luscious fruit, growing mellower and sweeter in the autumn of his life. Augustus enrolled him among his councillors with Livy and Virgil, under the title of Professor of Public Morals, and it was probably at this time that he declared:

So now I bid my idle songs adieu
And turn my thoughts to what is just and true.

The palace of Mæcenas with its magnificent library and gardens was always at his disposal, and not a lordly villa at Antium and Baiæ but would have been honoured could it have counted him its guest. Of these he writes:

No summer palace vast for me,
Whose walls, deep sunk beneath the sea,
Planned by some skilful architect,

Rise like the masts of galley wrecked,
And fright the fishes,
As the great builder's burly gang
The concrete fix with noisy clang.
I 've other wishes.

If demon Care must be my bride,
Within my brazen trireme ride,
And in my lofty towers reside
Like monster Scylla,
The many-columned colonnade,
A white procession in the shade
Of that fair villa,
Its grand, pilastered vestibule,
Of pavonazzo marble cool,
Which snow, faint-tinged with violet, seems,
Where purple, gold-starred drapery gleams,
Could never make for me a home.
Its regal iridescent dome
I 'd deem a bubble.
So why exchange my Sabine farm,
For weary wealth, for Care's alarm
And endless trouble? [1]

"I shall not wholly die," he said, with sure foreknowledge, shortly before they laid him by

[1] *Cæmenta:* mixture of small stones and mortar, concrete.

Redemptor, contractor or architect.

Phrygiuslapis, marble from Synnada, Phrygia, white spotted with violet.

Postibus invidendis, pilastered door, or colonnade *within* the hall.

the side of his loved friend, Mæcenas, on that sad November day, eight years before the Christian era,—the kindly, large-hearted man, so broadly humane that he will be read and loved by scholars while the world lasts; and that even the little farm is immortal.

His little house, his Sabine farm!
The hillside and the river!
There beat his kindly heart and warm:
There died—to live for ever.

NOTE.—The translations quoted, except where credited, are chiefly by E. Frère Champney.

DOMITIAN
Vatican Museum

CHAPTER IV

THE VILLA OF UNHAPPY LOVE

I

THE RETURN OF CIRCE

The perfume, and the music, and the flame
Had passed away; the memory of shame
  Alone abode, and stings of faint desire,
And pulses of vague unrest went and came.
Ah, Circe! in thy sad changed fairy place,
Our dead Youth came and looked on us a space,
  With drooping wings, and eyes of faded fire,
And wasted hair about a weary face.

ANDREW LANG.

"I TELL you no foreigners can enter Rome without authorisation of the Harbour Master," reiterated the sentry at the Portus Trajani. "You should have seen to that when you landed."

"But," persisted the traveller, "this is an altogether exceptional case. My mistress, the Queen of Chalcis, owns a house upon the Palatine, formerly the property of her brother, King Agrippa, to which she is now returning. I have been sent in advance to make it ready for her."

"Your mistress may be queen of all the rest of the earth, but she is not queen of Rome. We have but one ruler here, and that is the Emperor Titus. When he gives permission, you may enter—not before."

"I bear a letter to the Emperor, and ask nothing better than permission to deliver it to him in person."

"Doubtless, and so would any mad assassin. But the Emperor's person is safeguarded better than that. Strangers can reach him only through the proper officials. Your story of a queen of some outlandish country is more than likely trumped up to mask some villainy; but if not, you are in luck, for here comes the very man you would see."

"Is that the Emperor Titus?" asked the foreigner, as two horsemen approached.

"No, but the one so richly accoutred is his brother, Prince Domitian, while the older man

was with the Emperor at the siege of Jerusalem, and there is none so well informed in foreign affairs as he."

"And his name?"

"Gessius Florus, sometime Procurator of Judea. He will know at once whether your mistress should be permitted the freedom of the city."

The stranger uttered an exclamation of dismay, but the officious guard had already saluted Florus and now hurriedly explained the situation. Florus listened, at first indifferently, impatient of the delay, but when his ear caught the words, "Queen of Chalcis," he burst forth in a violent rage.

"No, by Pluto, by all the furies, no. No she-devil spawn of the Herods shall gain access to the Emperor. Back to your mistress, and bid her pack to Asia. Let her not set foot on shore, for if she attempts to enter Rome, by the eternal gods, I will kill her."

The Prince pricked his ear, curious as to what had so excited his companion.

"It is Berenice, daughter of one Herod and widow of another,—a vile family which has the habit of concentrating its vices by breeding in and in,—I knew them better than I wished, and your brother better than he should,—and

now this enchantress and wanton has dared to follow him to Rome; but rather than allow her to cross his path again, I will slay her as I would a viper."

"Stop a moment, my good Florus. Was she not in Rome with her brother Agrippa before Nero established him as king over Judea? I have a vague memory that I met her then and that she was not repulsive. Ought not this matter to be referred to Titus? He may not share your repugnance for the lady."

"The very reason why he must not see her —would I trouble myself to fight her if I did not fear her?"

"For the lady's sake as well," said Domitian thoughtfully, "it were safer that she should depart. The populace of Rome cherish for her your own warm feelings. Were she to regain my brother's favour, they would drag her naked through the streets to her death as they did Vitellius."

"And him also," Florus assented with a groan. "The people of Rome will not endure another Nero. Titus has won them because they believe him in earnest in his policy of reform of every kind. If he disappoints them, they would not hesitate in their in-

dignation to depose or even to assassinate him."

Domitian started. "Do you think so?" he asked, a sinister thought revealing itself for an instant in his face.

"I know it," replied the other grimly. "Vespasian had those beaten with rods who dared say that your brother loved her, but he lashed his son more mercilessly with his tongue, for he knew that it was true. And I, who carried out the old Emperor's orders, and frustrated her schemes again and again in the East, burning her palace in Jerusalem so that she could not return thither when the prince took the city,—I, who mocked and laughed at her, driving her from the camp, when she came theatrically garbed in sackcloth, with dishevelled hair and bare feet, to beg Titus for mercy for the Jews, nor suffered him to see that irresistible semblance of distress,—I, who wearied the gods with my thanks when he forsook his wild ways and became worthy of his high office—I tell you that this very I, who love him more than man ever loved his son, would slay him with my own hand rather than see him take to his heart that piece of corruption."

"You are right," assented Domitian, "she

must not be allowed to remain in Italy. But we must do things legally, my good Florus. Seek the pretor at once and obtain an order for her deportation."

"But this will consume time," objected Florus.

"Which can be spent in no better way. If this matter should come to the ears of the Emperor, it were well to have it appear that you acted under orders, and thus allow another to bear the blame. I will in the meantime detain our lady at the port; thence on your arrival a quick voyage to her own country to Queen Berenice!"

Convinced but reluctant, Florus rode into the city, while Domitian dashed in the direction of the seaport. He had not ridden far when he caught sight of the messenger, who had halted in the path of the cavalcade of the Queen of Chalcis, which was now rapidly approaching. Riding beside the litter of Berenice Domitian was surprised to recognise a close friend of his brother's, the Roman knight Cæcina, who, chancing to be at the harbour on the arrival of the Queen, had gallantly offered his escort to Rome.

The report of her courier had evidently thrown them both into consternation, and Do-

mitian appeared upon the scene in the light of a deliverer. He greeted Berenice with extravagant expressions of delight. "I was a witness," he exclaimed, "of the indignity to which you have been submitted, and I have come to anticipate the apologies and reparation which my brother will doubtless offer, when he hears of the insolence of his subordinate."

She strove to reply, but her teeth chattered and every vestige of colour had fled from her ashen cheeks. Domitian noted the tell-tale lines of age, the drawn lips, the dark hollows from which glared the terror-glazed eyes.

Under favourable conditions he might have found her captivating, but she had been surprised at a disadvantage, fear had for the moment obliterated the waning beauty of this woman once the most lauded of her time, and Domitian muttered to himself, "Hag and harpy," while he plied her with compliments and protestations of welcome.

Berenice in turn studied the face before her. The uncouth boy, whom she scarcely remembered, had developed into a magnificent specimen of physical manhood, and a jovial expression softened the lines of the sensual

mouth, which as yet gave no hint of the cruelty of later years.

Panic-stricken by the mere name of her enemy, Florus (whose barbarous massacre of her countrymen she had witnessed), she clutched frantically at the protection offered by Domitian. "But what can I do," she reiterated, "since this wretch is determined to kill me if I do not instantly leave Italy?"

"We must convince him that you have done so," Cæcina exclaimed. "I have a villa at Antium which is at your service. You must ostentatiously re-embark with all your suite, apparently for Asia; but I will bribe the captain of the vessel to land us at Antium, whence you can communicate at your leisure with Titus."

Domitian scowled, and Berenice reflected intently. She had taken this presumptuous step without the slightest authorisation from the Emperor, fearing to submit a written request to his sober judgment, uninfluenced by the charm of her personal fascination. Unwilling to forego her chief advantage, she begged Domitian to think of some means of introducing her into the city.

"This will be impossible," he replied "until the vigilance of Florus is relaxed; and in the

meantime? Ah! I have it. Accept Cæcina's offer so far as your embarrassing retinue is concerned. Let them wait your bidding at Antium until you have my brother's permission to enter Rome; but do you ride with me to the villa of my niece, Flavia Domitilla, which is close at hand? She will gladly keep you in hiding until I can arrange an interview with Titus."

Berenice hesitated, and Domitian, seizing her in his arms, mounted her upon the horse of one of her attendants, tempering the masterful action with vehement entreaties and vows of devotion. "Trust me, only trust me," he urged, "and I swear by all the gods that I will make you Empress of Rome."

"I will trust you," she replied, "for I am desperate."

Followed only by her most indispensable tirewoman perched upon a sumpter mule laden with the Queen's treasure-chest and a bale of finery, they struck into a side road leading across the country in the direction of the Via Appia; while her litter, in which one of the maids had taken her place, was conducted by Cæcina in frantic haste to Ostia.

The Princess Flavia Domitilla, though not actually in residence at the Villa Amaranthi-

ana, had driven out that day, to give orders to the workmen who were restoring the house in preparation for her marriage with her cousin, Flavius Clemens.

"We shall not occupy the villa for some months," she replied graciously, as her uncle preferred his request, "and if your friend will not be inconvenienced by the repairs which are in progress, I am sure that Clemens will be glad to place it at her service."

Domitian frowned. "Domitilla," he said, "the lady for whom I beg your courtesy is in great trouble, even danger, and, until I can arrange with the Emperor for her protection, I must beg you to keep her presence here a secret. I can only tell you that she is from Judea, and not only far from home and friendless, but of a religion proscribed in Rome."

A startled look flashed across Domitilla's face.

"Rely upon my absolute secrecy," she replied, and added to Berenice: "Noble Lady, my villa is honoured by receiving you. Stephanus will execute your orders. You may trust him implicitly, for—" she hesitated, observing that Domitian regarded her curiously,—"for he is absolutely faithful,"—and

her hand passed nervously from her brow to her breast as she hurriedly took her leave.

If this was a signal, only the freedman Stephanus comprehended, for Berenice's gaze was fixed upon Domitian.

"I go to Rome," he said, as soon as they were alone, "to inform Titus of the treasure which awaits him here. If he cannot come instantly, I at least will return to-morrow, bringing you some message from him."

"How can I reward such disinterestedness?" she asked, striving with stealthy half-shut eyes to penetrate the expressionless features.

"Can you ask?" he replied, flashing into well-simulated emotion. "I am not disinterested. I loved you hopelessly as a boy. I love you so insanely now that I will be your slave in all things, even to aiding you to become my brother's wife; but I am not disinterested, and when your ambition is accomplished I shall claim my reward."

She did not flinch, for she had expected this reply. It fell in line with her experience. With the exception of Florus, men had always loved her. It never occurred to her that here might be another exception, and, without pausing to ask herself the motives of

his pretended devotion, she took Domitian's face between her hands and whispered, "Be my true knight, and when I am Empress, you shall be my lover."

"And not before?" he laughed mockingly, holding her close. She lay unresisting, but unresponsive, in his arms, while he kissed her again and again.

When he had done, she faced him fearlessly and contemptuously. "Only a brute takes what is not willingly given. If you wish me to love you, Domitian, you must earn my love."

"And be tricked in the end, with my service for my pains, like that fool Cæcina?" he retorted.

She flushed, but answered imperiously, "I have given you my word. Cæcina cannot say that he is tricked, for I have promised him nothing, he has asked nothing but service."

A momentary flash of genuine admiration gleamed in Domitian's eyes. "You are a wonderful woman," he said, "and I wait your pleasure."

Outside the gate he laughed again as he struck spurs to his horse. "Cæcina shall have more of unrewarded service than he dreams," he muttered, "for I will make his love serve

my scheme, as well as the hatred of Florus; but I will guard you from that until my brother has brought ruin upon himself by marrying you, for you too, shall serve me ere I crush you, serpent though you are."

Berenice, left alone, also laughed. "You are a beast, Domitian," she said to herself, as she knotted her girdle disarranged by his rude caresses; "but if you dare to demand the fulfilment of my promise when I am Empress—then if Titus does not have you strangled,"—she put aside the hands of her tirewoman, who would have tied her scarf, and exclaimed, drawing it tight with so tragic a gesture that the woman trembled in spite of the commonplace words—"my hands are stronger than you think, I can do it myself."

Cæcina, chivalrous and unsuspicious, was serving with all his heart, and had been so fortunate as to effect the departure of Berenice's suite before the arrival of Florus.

The latter had been detained longer in Rome than he had anticipated, the pretor, Valerius Licianus, insisting on referring the question of Berenice's deportation to the Emperor. A visit to the Palatine had effected only an appointment for the following afternoon, and Florus, unwilling to wait, hastened

to the port determined to feign imperial authority and force Berenice to leave the country. Greatly relieved by Cæcina's assurance that she had already fled, a statement which was confirmed by many witnesses, he passed the night at Portus Trajani and returned to Rome on the following day with the young knight, whom he persuaded to accompany him in his call upon the Emperor.

They found Domitian lounging in the audience chamber, listening with an appearance of the utmost indifference to the report which the pretor was in the act of making. Titus, evidently under the influence of some strong emotion, greeted Cæcina absently and, addressing Florus, said sternly: "I am much displeased that the Queen of Chalcis should have been submitted to the discourtesy of being refused admission to the city, and I desire that an immediate apology be offered her."

Florus chuckled. "It is too late, Sire," he replied, "the lady has run away."

"Has—what?" demanded Titus sharply.

"Has cleared the country, as Cæcina can bear witness. We have just returned from the harbour whence she sailed yesterday with her Jewish rabble—and a good riddance to the entire crew, I call it."

"Your opinion is not asked," Titus retorted with averted face. But Florus detected in the altered tone an expression of infinite relief, and could scarcely disguise his delight, as he said to himself: "He is pleased! He had done with her! Daughter of the Infernal gods, I need not have feared you. You had no chance. Praise be to the furies, you had no chance."

Domitian and Cæcina regarded each other significantly, the face of the younger man anxious and questioning, while Domitian nodded encouragement. It was Valerius Licianus, however, who broke the embarrassing silence.

"Florus is so far right," he said, "in that the presence of the Queen of Chalcis in Rome would afford many complications. In the first place the populace have the absurd notion that there was some intrigue between you in the past."

"It is true," replied Titus. "I was a fool; she sapped my ambition, my sense of honour and duty. That I was not irretrievably ruined I owe to my father, who plunged me into violent action. But the mad young prince learned one lesson in the school of folly —that of his own weakness, and I thank the

gods that she has gone, for I must never see her again."

"Are you not a trifle too severe with yourself?" Domitian asked. "People are always striving to force their consciences upon us, but I should think that you had done enough for Rome to be allowed to follow the dictates of your own judgment. What emperor ever adorned the city with more magnificent public buildings or lavished his private resources on charity as you have done?"

"Since I became Emperor at least," Titus replied, "I have honestly tried to do my duty."

"Duty!" exclaimed Cæcina, who had striven in vain to master his intense feeling. "What, I ask you, is the duty of a man of honour to the woman who loves him, and whose heart he has broken?"

"Who can charge me with such a crime?" Titus demanded sternly.

"Berenice," replied Cæcina, "whom I saw distracted with grief, and for whose death you may be answerable."

"In justice, sir, allow the Emperor to answer your accusation," said Licianus, for Titus had covered his face. "Whatever can have passed between him and the Queen of Chalcis in

the past, you cannot charge him with broken vows. She must have known that Rome forbids her rulers to wed with women of foreign blood. Not even Cæsar or Antony in his most delirious moments dared to make Cleopatra his wife.[1] Surely, Sire, you did not marry her?"

"You forget," replied Titus, "that at that time I was bound by a loveless marriage. She knew that our love was hopeless."

"Not so," contradicted Cæcina. "She told me—and ask your memory if she spoke the truth—that you promised if *ever you were a free man,* you would prove your love. And now that your wife is dead, and she proves her devotion by throwing herself upon your magnanimity, do you refuse to protect or even to see her?"

"Listen to reason," pleaded Licianus, "and

[1] *Paulinus.*—Rome by a changeless law
Admits no foreign blood with hers to mingle.
Julius,—smitten with Cleopatra's beauty, feared
To wed her, and in Egypt left her lonely
To mourn his absence. Antony, whose love
Made her his idol, in her lap forgot
Country and fame, yet dared not call her wife:
Since then, my lord, Caligula and Nero,
Who trampled under foot all other laws,
Feared this one only.

RACINE.

consider how you can best protect her. Not by marrying her—were you so to break the laws of your country, the very same populace who went mad with joy when the long line of Jewish captives preceding your triumphal car bore the spoils of their temple to that of Capitoline Jove, would rise in revolution and repudiate you. Were you to keep her here as your mistress, they would despise you none the less, but the punishment would fall on her, for they would drag her from concealment and tear her limb from limb."

"That they would!" exclaimed Florus, "and every one of us who tried to protect you. By Mars, I 'd rather face another Jerusalem in revolt than the Roman populace when their blood is up."

"Titus is not a coward," sneered Domitian. "If I were Emperor I would govern Rome, and in my private life at least, I would not be of all men the most powerless."

"An emperor has no private life," replied Titus, with enforced calmness. "He belongs wholly to the state."

"The state should go to perdition," exclaimed Cæcina, "if it came between me and the woman I loved!"

Florus leapt forward unsheathing his sword,

COLOSSEUM SEEN THROUGH THE ARCH OF TITUS

but Titus lifted his hand. "Cæcina," he said, "you presume upon our friendship, and it stands the test of frankness. You may be right, for it is not easy in the labyrinth of life to choose the path of duty, but your desire to help me comes too late. Berenice has gone beyond recall."

"She has not! I met her as I told you, and she waits your decision in a safe shelter. I have promised her that you will see her."

Titus was very pale, "Then you promised what you had no right, and what I will never perform——"

"Where is she?" shouted Florus; "confess where you have hidden the Idumean witch that I may exterminate her."

"It is easy to guess her refuge," said Domitian, "we all know that Cæcina has a charming villa at Antium."

"Hold, Florus!" Titus commanded, "suffer her to go in peace. You, Cæcina, will atone for your impetuosity by carrying out my wishes. I shall assume that her visit is a diplomatic one, and shall, among other matters, request her to inform her brother that I have extended the bounds of Judea. I will give him more than Augustus Cæsar gave to Herod, and I will support his rule with our

army. But neither he nor she can return to Rome. Wait here until I have written the letter, and make sure my friend, make very sure, that this time she actually sails for Asia.

"And you Florus, lest you may be tempted to spy upon Cæcina, and treat the Queen of Chalcis with some discourtesy, come with me for a brisk ride. It will restore the even balance of our minds. Mine has been shaken as well as yours, my brave Florus. And Licianus, among the refugees from the late destruction of Pompeii, there came to me a young Greek artist, who entreated my patronage. I told him that I was selling my most cherished works of art in order to provide for his fellow-sufferers, and could only commission him to decorate the Villa Amaranthiana, where my niece Domitilla and Flavius Clemens are to pass their honeymoon. I am curious to inspect the work of my protégé, and it may interest you also. Will you not ride with us?"

Domitian could scarcely credit his hearing. He had recognised the characteristic set of his brother's lower jaw, so like that of their father's when over-urged. He knew that Cæcina had gone too far, and had only made

Titus inflexible. No power under heaven would induce his brother to see Berenice,—but here was heaven itself, leading the victim into the very toils which he was so determined to avoid.

II

WHY THE NAME OF THE VILLA WAS CHANGED

In such a hall the roof of some strange wood,
Brought over sea, was dyed as red as blood.
With richest webs the marble walls were hung,
Picturing sweet stories by the poets sung
From ancient days, so that no walls seemed there.

WILLIAM MORRIS.

Berenice's first concern after her installation in the Villa Amaranthiana had been to explore the refuge so opportunely afforded her. The rooms of the main building were, with the exception of the atrium, small and unpretentious, but the principal hall was constructed of such costly materials and adorned with such exquisite sculptural ornament as to give the stamp of distinction to the entire palazzita.

It was moreover to have the added attractiveness of colour, for the painter Asklatarion,

whose services had been presented to the Princess by the Emperor, had been directed to decorate its walls with frescoes in the Pompeian style.

An ordinary decorator might have traced the slender candelabra and ribboned garlands which formed the framework of the panels, but as Berenice watched the young Greek swiftly sketching with assured and unerring hand the graceful figures that floated in the centre, she realised that here was an artist of no common talent.

Gratified by her praise, Asklatarion showed her all his work, much of which he was lavishing on the interior of the family tomb, a series of sepulchral chambers excavated in the hillside. Berenice was surprised, both by the extent and beauty of these rooms, whose vaulted ceilings were frescoed with festoons of grapevine, between which winged creatures with human faces (which Asklatarion thought might represent protecting genii) looked benevolently down. The subjects in the tomb were an enigma even to the artist, for they had been executed from sketches made by the Princess, while in the villa only had he been allowed a free hand. One of the larger chambers was evidently a triclinium or

banquet-hall, for on the wall a feast was represented, at which twelve guests assisted. The host, seated in the centre, was raising a wine-cup, not with the jovial air of one proposing a toast, but with a dignity which seemed to imply that this was a libation to some god.

In another chamber a beautiful youth was portrayed carrying a kid upon his shoulder, and followed by a flock of sheep. As Berenice paused admiring this figure, the painter explained that it was doubtless intended for Apollo tending the herds of Admetus, as the Princess had desired him to depict here his highest ideal of spiritual beauty.

A discreet cough was heard, and Berenice noticed that they had been joined by Stephanus, who elevated his eyebrows in pitying scorn of the decorator's ignorance. "It is the Good Shepherd," he whispered; "the man is a heathen Greek, and knows nothing of our religion."

"Our religion!" reflected Berenice; "can it be that the man is a Jew?" and dismissing the artist, she asked Stephanus if the Princess Flavia Domitilla was accustomed to entertain her friends in her family sepulchre. The servitor nodded mysteriously: "Follow me," he

said, "and I will show you the hall of assembly."

Mounting a broad staircase, they reached a large basilica on a higher level than the other subterraneous galleries. It contained nave and aisles with a fore-court, and its roof was lighted by a fine *luminare,* or well leading to the open air.

Stephanus unlocked an iron grating and showed a narrow passageway stretching on into the darkness. "This gallery," he said, "leads to the cemetery of the Cornelii. Its gate is upon the Via Appia, and there the faithful enter when a secret meeting is called."

"I knew at Cæsarea a Roman officer named Cornelius," said Berenice. "He was highly respected, though it was known that he was a Christian."

"He was formerly our neighbour," replied Stephanus, "and his daughter Cornelia was the playmate of my mistress and is still her dearest friend. But when Cornelia was a little maid of ten her father, who had not then a knowledge of the truth, compelled her to become a Vestal. She is now the Abbess of that order, and her old home is occupied by relatives; but she comes often to the family tomb to venerate her ancestors, and when she does

so, never fails to pass through this corridor to find my mistress as in the old days. She will rejoice that you knew her father in Judea. Did you chance to meet there our great apostle Paul?"

"I have heard him speak," Berenice replied, "and so eloquently that my blood froze in my veins."

"It was he who converted my mistress," said Stephanus, "and Flavius Clemens also, who is soon to be her husband. He is the cousin of the Emperor, and we hope that Titus also may in time be enlightened, for no one so good and generous-minded has ever sat upon the throne of the Cæsars."

Not until now was Berenice certain that she fully comprehended the drift of the conversation. Earlier in its course she would have indignantly denied that she was a Christian; but as the suspicion gradually dawned upon her that the Princess Flavia was a member of this proscribed class, she realised that through her confidence and that of her servant, secrets could be learned which might be of service to herself and she was craftily silent. It was enough for the present to know of this hidden entrance to the villa, and she returned to the atrium, where she found Asklatarion laying

aside his brushes, for the fading light had for that day put an end to his labours.

"One moment," she commanded, as he took his leave, "who are the eight beautiful women whom you have depicted hovering in the air in the centre of these panels?"

Asklatarion shrugged his shoulders. "Whom you will, Lady. The Emperor demanded only that I body forth heroines of the Greek poets,—but alas! having been instructed in painting rather than in letters, I know not so many."

"The Emperor!" Berenice exclaimed; "will he come here to view your decorations?"

"Yes, for my work in this villa is a commission from him. I sought his patronage, but the building of the new palace has been stopped. 'The home of my childhood will serve me,' he said to his brother in my hearing, 'while fire, pestilence, and the convulsions of nature leave my subjects shelterless.' The Prince Domitian is building a magnificent villa on Lake Albano, where I hope to find employment. There is a royal spendthrift, and we artists, as well as harlots and other ministers to superfluous joy, must wait for recognition until he comes to the throne;—

and yet between the two men—" he whistled softly.

"No," Berenice replied absently, "we will *not* wait. I will help you with your work and Titus shall admire it so much that he will long to possess more. In return you must help me in precisely the same way."

"But in what way, fair Lady?"

"To-morrow," Berenice explained, "you shall have a name to inscribe beneath each of your figures, but you must alter their faces so that each shall bear a likeness to my own: not a slavish portrait, you understand, but give each at least one markedly personal characteristic, while the other features remain more beautiful. Thus the combined impression of all will suggest me, and me alone, to any beholder who has ever seen me. Let this one have my profile, that my hair. You have given some pretty postures to your dancing maidens, but none of them have the lines of my figure, or the abandon of a famous dance known exclusively to the Herodian women, and in which my cousin Salome alone could rival me."

Enthusiasm had transformed her,—a rich colour glowed in her cheeks, and her eyes bewildered him with their depth and lustre. The

face of the young artist was radiant. "And will you really pose for me? Praxitiles himself had never such a model."

"And why should I not pose for you? It will serve to pass the time in this lonely habitation which is less a villa than a tomb."

So the hours of the following day sped by too swiftly by far for the entranced artist. The beauty of his subject, which was even more that of expression than of feature, baffled while it bewitched him. To her dazzling eyes alone could he do full justice; and these looked from every face, devouring the beholder with their bold fascination.

Berenice, to while the tedium of posing, told him the legend connected with each name which she commanded him to inscribe on the tablet beneath the figures,—Pasiphaë, Canace, Phædra, Myrrha, Scylla, Circe, and Calypso.

"But these are all women of misfortune," said Asklatarion, "unhallowed and unhappy in their loves."

"True," she replied, "and such am I. Tell your mistress that I have renamed her residence. It is no longer the Villa Amaranthiana; but the Villa of Unhappy Love; so may my memory linger here when I am gone."

"You should not return kindness with

bane," said Asklatarion. "The Princess Domitilla and the Consul Flavius Clemens are noble souls, they should be happy."

"Happiness comes not to those who deserve, but to those who snatch it, and not always to them. I am wearied with posing. It is late in the day. Why does not Domitian fulfil his promise and bring his brother? And you, why are you going away?"

"If you will sit no longer, I must finish the frescoes in the sepulchral chambers."

"Then I will watch you there, for I am dying of loneliness."

She followed him across the garden, but she had scarcely entered the tomb when the clatter of hoofs was heard upon the road, and the Emperor, accompanied by Valerius Licianus and Florus, and guarded by a small escort of pretorians, dismounted at the gate of the villa.

Titus passed with Licianus to the atrium which Berenice had just quitted, but Florus wandered into the tomb and paused at Asklatarion's side, thus unconsciously preventing Berenice from joining the Emperor. The artist was painting by torchlight and Florus could only dimly discern that a female figure shrunk into the shadow and fled through the

long passageway into the interior of the sepulchre. For the moment he gave the circumstance no special thought. The coolness of the place was grateful after the long, hot ride and, throwing himself upon a stone bench, he studied the frescoes, striving vainly to grasp their meaning.

Titus and Licianus in the meantime strolled through the atrium and examined Asklatarion's paintings with ever increasing admiration. But the Emperor was also weary and, while Licianus followed Stephanus to the triclinium for refreshment, he reclined in the cushioned alcove, which Berenice had just quitted, and gave himself up to a luxurious enjoyment of the lovely environment.

The apartment was unfurnished save for jars filled with roses, which always carried him in memory to the rose-gardens of Cæsarea. There was also a subtle perfume about the cushions, heavier than that of the roses, and vaguely familiar. What was it? Sandalwood or musk? He seemed to see a straight thin line of smoke rising from a brazen incense burner, curling ere it dissipated into fanciful convolutions. Incense of the same kind burned centuries before in the seraglio of Solomon, compounded (who was it said so?)

of " spikenard and saffron, calamus and cassia, frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, and all chief spices."

The painting directly opposite represented a siren playing upon a lute, and Titus remembered the soft pulsing of lutes and viols on the day when he came upon Berenice, (quite by accident as he fancied), in her brother's Cæsarean palace. The lace-like arches of pierced alabaster of the garden kiosk framed her graceful figure as she leaned upon her elbows reading from a roll of parchment. It was wonderful how each detail of that meeting came back to him. So complete had been her absorption in her story that she did not hear his footstep upon the marble pavement until his shadow fell across the page.

Then her eyes had transfixed him, reading his face with eager delighted recognition, for they had known each other years before when Herod had sent his children to be educated in Rome.

" So you have come at last," she said. " A Jewess should not rejoice at such a coming —but if you knew how I have longed for it." She held out her arms and he, wilfully misunderstanding, took from her hand the parch-

ment roll and fixed his eyes upon it. The story was that of Canace, the whirlwind daughter of Æolus, and he frowned. "Ovid is not worthy of you," he had said, "read rather the Greek poets."

"Read them to me," she had replied, pushing toward him a basket filled with rolls which stood beside her couch.

After that he had loitered long at Cæsarea, though continual despatches urged his direction of the siege of Jerusalem, and he wondered not as he read to her the adventures of the too susceptible Ulysses that the hero should have lingered for eight years a willing prisoner in the embrace of Calypso.

So they had lived in phantasy, absorbing the subtlest form of love's contagion, sublimed from passionate human hearts by the genius of the greatest poets. She told him, too, the poisonous Egyptian myths older and wilder than the Odyssey, and legends handed down by one Oriental story-teller to another till, reason besotted and imagination hypnotised, he became as really drugged as any slave of hasheesh or opium.

The old heart-wound had completely healed, as he imagined, and yet what was this nameless ache revived by mere imagery upon the

wall suggestive of women of lurid lives and monstrous loves against which his moral sense revolted?

Licianus returned and spoke to him, but he did not answer. He shook him and supported him into the open air, but Titus walked as one in a dream. "Are you ill?" Licianus asked anxiously.

"Not ill, but stifling for air," Titus answered; "let us walk across the fields while my brain clears." They strode together until they came to the *luminare* which lifted its curb of masonry like a well-head from the underground basilica. Leaning upon it, they rested and talked seriously and confidentially, not suspecting who crouched and listened beneath.

"I have been thinking," said Titus, "of the hard things which Cæcina said, and that after all he may be right. Love is not love which defers to the judgment, and the hero Ulysses, you remember, did not hesitate to go straight to hell for the sake of Circe."

"Yes," replied Licianus, "but he did not stay there. Was it not his coming back which proved him a hero?"

"That is a man's reasoning; but is there not something that more thrills the heart in a woman's sublime disregard of consequences?

Suppose for an instant that Berenice is disinterested, that, impelled solely by a love greater than we men can conceive, she has forgotten every consideration except her affection for me, and has come to throw herself upon my mercy, would it not be the height of infamy to repulse her?"

"That is the vital question," Licianus replied. "Can you be certain that such a woman really loves? There were scandalous stories told of her after the death of Herod, which her brother strove to stifle by marrying her to the King of Cilicia. But she left her second husband to return to her old life at the court of Agrippa."

"Only vile tongues repeat vile tales, and only vile minds credit them. Berenice left Polemon and returned to Judea for the same reason that she comes now to Rome—to find me."

There was a pause before Licianus took up the argument. "Suppose that she does love you, what then? Is there any kindness in accepting affection which you cannot return?"

"To answer all these questions," Titus replied with emotion, "I must *see* her. I loved her once—I am not so sure that I do not love her now."

Licianus caught his breath in dismay, and Titus continued in low intense tones. "Suppose she does love me—you ask, What then? I answer that if I were only certain of that, there would be no doubt in my mind, no hesitation in my conduct. I would give up the Empire, my life, my soul, for her sake."

"My friend, my best of friends," Licianus pleaded, and there was a note of anguish in his voice," listen to me this once and I will say no more. Love is not always happiness. Sometimes I think it the most cruel discipline which the gods send us. Mine has been such to me."

"Yours!" exclaimed Titus in surprise, "I never knew that you had loved."

"I have loved vainly for twenty years a woman whom I can never hope to possess,—Cornelia, Abbess of the Vestals."

"Hush!" exclaimed Titus, "do you not know that to breathe such a word were to expose her to the danger of a horrible death?"

"I know it, but I know also that you will believe me when I say that no word of love has passed or shall ever pass my lips,—that I respect her high office, but still more her stainless soul. I tell you this secret that you may know that others not so strong as yourself

have borne the burden of hopeless love and have found in it an ecstasy beyond that of mere happiness."

A smothered cry far away or deep in the earth beneath was heard by each. It seemed to Titus that some one had called his name, and he asked wonderingly, "Was that the wail of some evil spirit?" But though both men listened intently there was no repetition of the sound.

"Valerius," said Titus, "your story is unlike mine. You have the approval of your conscience, but the furies lash me continually. I was reading in Plato but yesterday and his words have burned themselves into my brain: 'There is a divine justice, which neither you young man nor any other will glory in escaping. If you say, I am great, you are not so great but you shall pay the fitting penalty. This is the fate also of all those who have done unholy and evil deeds, and you fancied that they had become happy, and in their actions seemed to see the neglect of the gods, not knowing how they make all things work together and contribute to the great whole.'"

They left the villa grave and silent, and so preoccupied in their own reflections that they did not remark the absence of Florus, who was

at that moment engaged in a somewhat remarkable adventure.

Terrified by his unexpected appearance, Berenice had fled to the basilica, hoping to escape by the underground gallery which Stephanus had explained led to the villa of the Cornelii. She was dismayed to discover that the gate between the two cemeteries was locked, and that Stephanus had carried away the key. She was trapped if Florus followed her, but a few moments of agonised listening convinced her that he had not done so.

Voices floated down to her from the *luminare*, and she recognised that of Titus, speaking with some unknown person. Every word was distinctly audible, and Berenice listened greedily until at the declaration, "I am not so sure that I do not love her now," she sprang to her feet determined to discover herself to Titus if Florus had left his post. But before she could put this resolution into execution, the gate leading to the villa of the Cornelii was unlocked by some one on the other side, and a tall and beautiful woman in the white robe and mantle of the Vestals entered the basilica. She was about to question Berenice, but the latter pointed upward to the *luminare* with a

warning "Hush," and at that moment Licianus made the avowal of his love.

Cornelia stood transfixed until he had concluded, when she turned intending to retreat as she had come;—but the shock had been too great, she reeled and would have fainted had not Berenice leapt to her support, with a wild cry which startled her back to consciousness.

"Who are you?" the Vestal asked, gazing wonderingly at the stranger, whose demon-like beauty frightened while it fascinated her.

"Only an unhappy woman like yourself," Berenice replied, "and one who will keep your secret if you will aid her to escape."

"I have no secret," Cornelia retorted with dignity, pausing in a second attempt to leave the basilica, as Florus rushed tumultuously in from the direction of the Villa Amaranthiana.

"I tell you," he shouted to the protesting Asklatarion who followed, "that this anklet which I found by the doorway is no Roman trinket, but that of some Oriental woman, and now I bethink me, there was a woman skulking in the shadow. Stand aside that I may know whom you have in hiding."

But Berenice had glided through the gateway from which Cornelia had appeared, and

the astonished Florus found himself confronted by the woman who above all others commanded the respect of every Roman. Rebuking him sternly for intruding in a temple commemorative of the dead and therefore inviolable, Cornelia rejoined Berenice, whom she found cowering in a side passage.

"Save me," implored the terrified woman, "for I dare not return to the Villa Amaranthiana."

"My chariot is at the gate of our villa," replied Cornelia. "I will direct the charioteer to take you where you will." Without further inquiry, she hastily robed Berenice in the white mantle of her order, whose ample hood effectually concealed the features of the fugitive.

The significance of the kindly act was not lost upon Berenice. Evidently Cornelia knew that the cemetery of the Princess Flavia Domitilla was often used as a place of refuge for hunted Christians (one of whom she supposed Berenice to be), and, pagan though she was, it proved that the Abbess of the Vestals was in sympathy with her friend's endeavour to protect them.

For an instant Berenice thought of driving at once to the Palatine and demanding an

audience with the Emperor; but she was too cowardly and too indirect in her methods for such a stroke, and she gave the order, "To the villa of Prince Domitian, on Lake Albano."

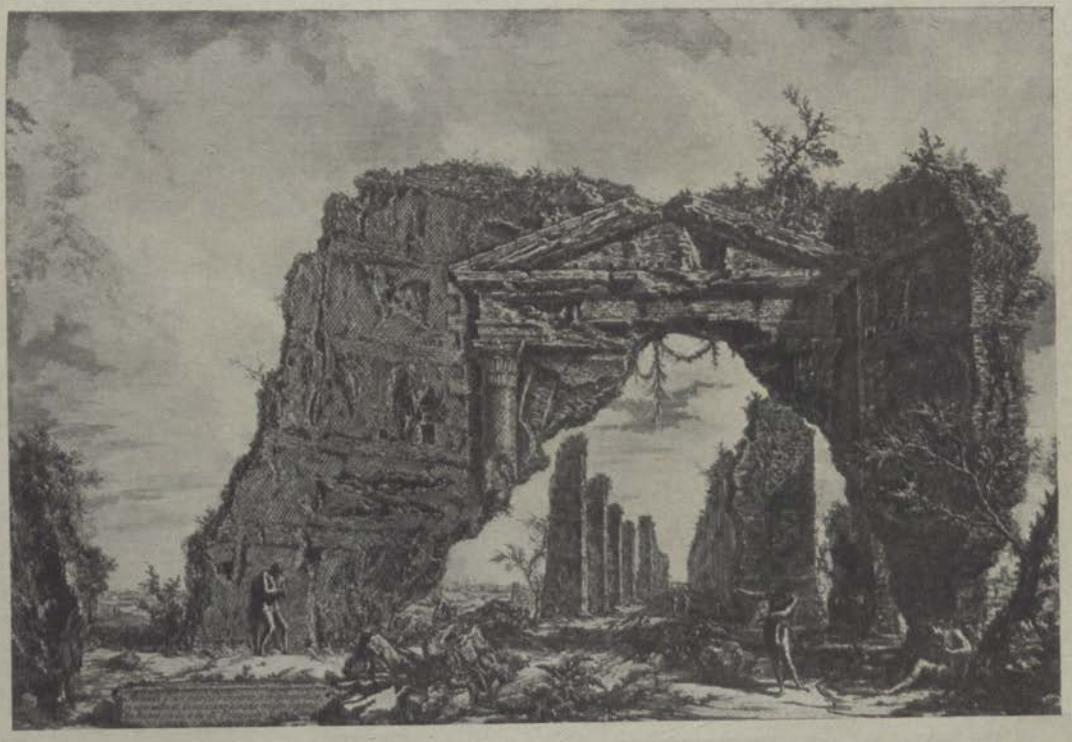
It was a long drive and night had fallen when she arrived, but fortunately for her Domitian was at his country-seat.

Apprehensive as to what might occur at the Villa Amaranthiana, and wishing to divert from himself any suspicion of complicity in Berenice's presence there, he had ridden but a short distance from Rome with his brother, and had then announced his intention of retiring to his villa for a few days, to make arrangements for a festival with which he intended to celebrate the birthday of Titus.

The Emperor appeared gratified by the compliment, and recommended to his brother's patronage a troop of female gladiators from Dalmatia, who desired an opportunity of exhibiting their skill as retiariæ.

"Strive," he added, "so to order the performance that they shall run no great danger. They are comely creatures and I would not willingly see any one of them die."

Titus was in fact well pleased that Domitian was interesting himself in athletic sports, for



RUINS OF VILLA OF DOMITIAN AT ALBANO

From an etching by Piranesi

the late Emperor Vespasian, who distrusted his younger son, had inexorably shut him out from any share in governing, but had allowed him free scope in building. "It will keep him out of mischief," he had said to Titus, who in turn had followed his father's policy.

Domitian had thus become as great a connoisseur in the arts as Nero, whom he resembled in many characteristics. At his Alban villa he had built an amphitheatre and stadium, in which he rivalled the gladiatorial contests of the Colosseum. But these amusements were simply mischief of another sort from the political intrigue which his father feared, and the deviltries of Domitian's "Albanum" have rarely been surpassed in history. Women of every class had been its guests, but as so frequently happens, Domitian longed for the unattainable, and had set his heart on possessing the purest woman in all Rome, the beautiful Cornelia. He had been repulsed more than once, but when informed that the Abbess of the Vestals desired to see him he believed that he had attained his ambition, and great was his disgust when he removed the cloak of his visitor and recognised Berenice.

His disappointment showed itself for an instant in his face, and from that malignant

look Berenice first realised that Domitian's kindness to her was not caused by any personal attraction, but by some motive which she had not as yet divined. None the less she felt that for some mysterious reason he was in earnest in his professed desire to aid her to become his brother's wife.

He listened with the keenest interest to her account of what had transpired during the visit of Titus to the Villa Amaranthiana, and shook both her hands in genuine delight when she repeated the Emperor's confession of his love.

"He must see you while this mood lasts!" he exclaimed. "I can arrange it, for he has promised to come to the fête which I shall give in my new stadium. I am to have the Greek painter. I will write him to bring your belongings. I will send also to Antium for whatever you require. Call on me besides for anything you wish, for you must dress for this spectacle as you never dressed before."

Again he questioned her more closely, making her repeat every word of the conversation which she had overheard, and at the avowal made by Licianus of his affection for Cornelia, his face became fiendish in its crafty cruelty. "He shall die for that," he muttered, "but

CRYPTOPORTICUS

not now,—I will use him first, until she is in my power. So she goes by underground ways to meet him, and Florus saw her. He shall be my witness unless she pays my price. You have done more for me than you realise, and I foresee victory for us both."

III

IN THE TOILS

As fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as birds that are caught in the snare: so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falleth suddenly upon them.

And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets and her hands bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her.

Ecclesiastes ix., 12, and vii., 26.

Rome had been sated with gladiatorial shows in the newly completed Flavian amphitheatre. The Colosseum had been planned and partially constructed by Vespasian, Titus had no choice but to finish his father's enterprise, and once completed to give the Roman populace the games in which they delighted. But even during the festivities which celebrated his accession, he had wearied of the

slaughter, and for the fête with which Domitian now celebrated his birthday novelties had been prepared which it was hoped would surprise the most blasé habitué of the amphitheatre and the circus.

Flavius Clemens, the cousin of Titus and Domitian, was master of ceremonies, for the law ordained that the Consul should conduct all entertainments given in honour of the Emperor. But Clemens was noted for his aversion to gladiatorial sports, and Domitian had appointed Florus his assistant.

To grace the occasion Florus had draped his burly person conspicuously in a toga gorgeous with embroidery of Damascus, in which he pompously strutted about the stadium, conversing familiarly with the performers and explaining the technicalities of the contests to his colleague.

In marked contrast to this swaggering bully was the man with whom he chanced to be associated. Clemens's well-developed head indicated mental power, but the jaw and throat were not as heavy as those of the other Flavians and his face, though not severe, was deeply serious, even melancholy. It was the face of a scholar and a thinker, and to please the literary taste of Titus, he had suggested that the en-

tertainment should be dramatic rather than athletic. Domitian had so far approved of the idea as to have personally adapted a few selection from Greek authors, in such a manner as to lead up to the contests, which had been planned to take place not on the stage of a theatre but in the stadium of his villa.

A magnificent alcove, flanked by Corinthian columns, framed a statue of Augustus and formed a dignified architectural background for the imperial family and a few privileged spectators.

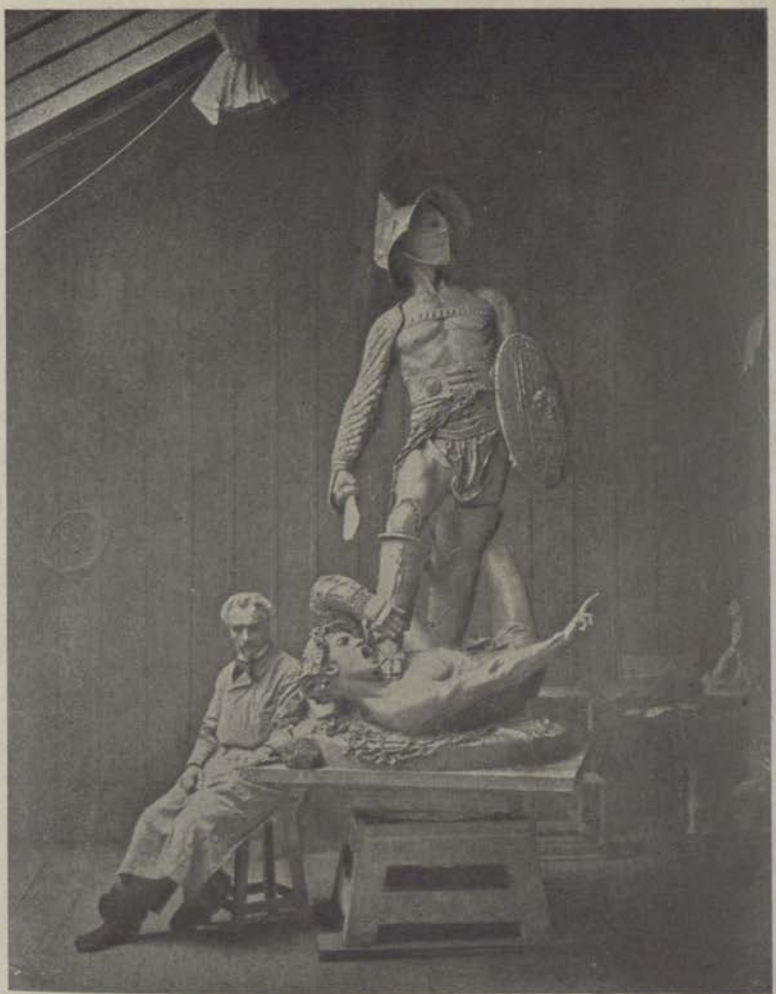
The Emperor occupied the centre of this group. At his right the frivolous Domitia, the wife of Domitian, lolled and yawned; next to her was seated the stately dowager Empress Domitilla, the mother of Titus, and nestling close, her shrinking namesake, the Princess Flavia Domitilla, hid her face behind her grandmother's shoulder. The principal Vestals and some intimate friends were the only other guests, and the programme presented was worthy of the distinguished audience.

Feats of strength and skill followed each other in dazzling succession. Wrestlers from Gaul, archers from Britain, runners from

Thrace, singers from southern Greece, dancers and magicians from Egypt, the finest swordsmen in the Roman army, vied with each other for the plaudits of the spectators; every artist was a star in his profession, and it seemed as if Domitian must have exhausted all that the world had to offer and the capacity of his guests for enjoyment before the rendition of the concluding feature.

Expectation had, however, been kept alive by the rumour that in this act some novelty of a startling character would be presented. It was announced as "The Combat of Alexander the Great with Myrrha, Queen of the Amazons." The title was in itself an appetising one, for this fabled nation of female warriors had always exercised a supreme fascination over the Roman imagination. They were believed to be haters of mankind, whom they excluded from their country, in Asia Minor, whence they made incursions upon the Greeks, taking prisoners who became their husbands of a night, and were then pitilessly slain, as were their male children.

But there was a legend that their Queen, hearing of the exploits of Alexander, had fallen in love with the hero of her imagination and had challenged him to fight with her in



GÉRÔME WITH STATUE OF A MIRMILLO AND RETIARIUS

A study for his "Pollice Verso"

presence of their respective armies,—the conquered to remain the slave of the victorious champion.

To the female athletes recommended to Domitian by Titus were assigned the part of the Amazons, and Florus, before whom they had rehearsed the exercise of the net and trident, was satisfied with their skill. But Domitian had not invited either Florus or Clemens to a rehearsal of the performance, and the nominal directors of the programme were destined to a distinct surprise.

Domitia, who had until now affected the utmost indifference as to the spectacle, suddenly uttered a low cry and watched the final duel with intense interest, for she had recognised her husband in the mysterious gladiator personating Alexander, who now advanced to attack the beautiful Amazon. Incontestably beautiful even Domitia conceded her to be, as, bared to the waist, she flung her net in graceful circles over the head of the alert gladiator, who dodged it adroitly, rushing forward after each cast only to lunge savagely at empty air, as the agile woman eluded his thrusts.

So the manœuvres continued; the net hovering continually like some winged bird of prey above its victim, the retiaria circling swiftly,

advancing, retreating, as in some sinister dance, and singing tauntingly:

"I am fishing, little brother,
But I 'm wishing for another.
Though I snare you in my net
Not on you my heart is set.
You may flee me if you wish
For I seek a nobler fish!" [1]

Domitian, apparently wearied by the weight of his ponderous cuirass and helmet and the long-continued play, was evidently on the defensive. His attacks were less frequent, and he backed by degrees nearer to the imperial party, while his antagonist, as fresh as at the beginning, her eyes sparkling and cheeks glowing with the violent exercise, tempted him to useless effort by hazardous feints from which she sprang aside to fling the net at shorter distance and with more assured aim.

Suddenly the Princess Flavia Domitilla uttered a stifled shriek as the net descended accurately, so entangling the gladiator that, stumbling forward, he fell helpless at the feet of his antagonist.

[1] A free translation of the song of the retiarius—"Non te peto piscem peto, Quid me fugis, non te peto."

The victorious Amazon, her foot upon the prostrate form, poised her trident above her victim's throat, waiting the permission of the audience to drive it home.

But Titus lifted his hand in repetition of the gesture given by the sculptor to the statue of Augustus, beneath which he stood, and the merciful signal of the upturned thumb was imitated by the Vestals and by the other guests.

Domitian rose, recognised now by all, for he was unhelmeted, and taking the Queen of the Amazons by the hand, bowed deeply to the applauding spectators. Florus only refused to join in the plaudits. "A fake performance," he grumbled. "Domitian could easily have killed her had he chosen so to do, this was no honest fight; but clever acting to a prearranged conclusion."

"Since the acting was clever," said Flavius Clemens, "why do you withhold the meed of applause?"

Florus did not reply. His eyes were fixed in a fascinated stare upon the face of the Amazonian Queen, whose identity he had not until now suspected. Berenice had thrown aside the heavy leggings and cestus, and exchanging her net for a spangled gauze scarf, handed her by an attendant, was now executing

the marvellous Herodian dance, to the accompaniment of Oriental music. Nothing approaching it in seductiveness had ever been seen by her audience;—now, while the Egyptian derrabukehs throbbed and boomed, she crouched panther-like, waiting for the clash of the cymbals to bound like a Bacchante in wild leaps, or for the delicious swell of the viols to whirl in dizzying circles which the eye could scarcely follow, again, to the drowsy, monotonous drone of the nebel-citherns she slowly swayed in lascivious postures, bending far backward upborne as by some invisible surge, or skimming the air like a swiftly darting dragon-fly; but advancing or retreating her focal-point through these varying evolutions was always the Emperor, whose eyes were wide-open doors through which his soul went out to meet her.

At last, dancing slowly backward, but with arms extended longingly toward him, she made her exit through the colonnade, whose ordered columns, like the trees in some woodland avenue, alternately hid and disclosed her vanishing figure.

Before she had quite disappeared and while the tumultuous music still surged in the ears and modulated the heart-throbs of the listen-

ers, Titus, as though compelled by some will beyond his power to resist, rose and followed her with the mien of one walking in his sleep.

Not until the door had closed behind the two did the spectators recover from the spell to which they also had yielded, and a universal murmur of eager comment and question filled the air. No one was more excited than Florus, who threw himself upon Domitian like a projectile, and demanded how and why Berenice had been introduced into his villa.

Domitian shrugged his shoulders, "As to the why you must judge for yourself, my friend,—and the how you already know, for you were with us when Titus asked me to give the retiariæ a place upon the programme."

Florus's jaw fell and he started in consternation. "Do you mean," he stammered, "that Titus was playing us false, when he sent Cæcina to Antium to despatch her to Asia?"

"Exactly. Berenice has not been at Antium, as Cæcina and Titus well knew. That was a little subterfuge to deceive us. She has been concealed all the while at a villa near Rome, where Titus has visited her under our very noses."

"It is true, it is true," Florus groaned. "Oh, fool that I have been! The Villa

Amaranthiana. I suspected it while I was there, and Titus was making love to her somewhere in that labyrinth while I, like an ass, was standing on guard to keep him from interruption. But if that is true, Licianus is also his accomplice, and the Abbess of the Vestals as well, and the Princess Flavia Domitilla!"

"We know not how wide-spread the plot may be," Domitian replied, affecting deep concern.

"What plot?" Florus inquired anxiously. "Surely this is nothing more than a passing fancy, a temporary liaison."

"You do not know the Queen of Chalcis," the other replied. "It was for no liaison that she deserted the King of Cilicia. She has staked all for the imperial diadem."

Flavius Clemens, who was passing, caught the last words and paused. "Yes, come and give us your advice," Florus cried, not heeding the warning pressure of Domitian's hand upon his arm. "Here is a pretty tangle, and you may be able to influence your cousin, which is more than we can do, though Domitian and Valerius Licianus and I argued with him for an hour and he feigned to be convinced."

"To whom do you refer?" asked Clemens; "surely not to the Emperor?"

"Yes, the Emperor," Domitian replied; "he has gone raving mad, for surely were he in his senses, he would not insult his family by introducing so vile a creature to them, and ostentatiously displaying his infatuation for her in this public manner. There is but one step more that he can take, and that is to marry her and crown her in the eyes of all Rome."

"That were insanity, indeed!" exclaimed Clemens. "May our country be preserved from such a disaster!"

"I will save the nation and him also," cried Florus. "I have sworn to kill her, and I will do it before the dawning of another day."

"No, Florus," commanded Domitian, "no violence. There is still law in Rome, and if Clemens means what he says, if affection for my poor demented brother has not blinded him, it is in his power to restrain him from this atrocious act."

"I will plead with him at once as Florus wishes," Clemens volunteered eagerly.

"You will only anger him, and confirm him the more obstinately in the carrying out of his own desires. As Florus informed you, we have already exhausted persuasion and argument. There remains only force." Clemens gave Domitian a swift, keen look of inquiry

and Florus uttered a low whistle of surprise. "Yes," reiterated Domitian, "Titus must be made to understand that the Emperor himself cannot break Rome's laws with impunity. It is your duty as Consul to lay this matter before the Senate."

"I shall resort to such an extreme measure," replied Clemens, "only when I am convinced that there is need for it."

Domitian smiled malevolently. "I hesitated to speak to you of this," he said, "but it is as well to know how you stand. If you, as well as the Princess Flavia, have been bribed by Berenice, the remainder of the family have but little hope."

Clemens's eyes grew dark with anger. "You have charged my betrothed with an accusation which I cannot pass over without proof or retraction."

"Ask Florus, here, if my niece is not entertaining the Queen of Chalcis as her guest, and has not arranged assignations with the Emperor for her at the Villa Amaranthiana."

"You lie, Domitian, or are strangely deceived."

"He speaks the truth!" exclaimed Florus. "They hide her in the cryptoporticus of the villa. I myself caught a glimpse of her there,

but I could not credit my eyes, and when I gave chase, I heard the Emperor's voice, but she escaped me in the labyrinthinc passages while I was held in converse by Cornelia. Oh! they are both in league with Titus. I see it all now. I wondered that the Princess Flavia should have caused such extensive sepulchral chambers to be excavated, and that the Emperor should have had them decorated as though they were the palace of some queen of the under world. That is precisely what they are! I shall explore them thoroughly, and I doubt not that I shall discover a secret exit through the cemetery of the Cornelii. The Emperor has evidently had this in mind for some time. Ask the servants of the villa, ask the Princess Flavia herself for what purpose that cunningly constructed hiding-place was prepared if not as a retreat for her uncle's mistress."

Flavius Clemens was white as death. "I will ask Domitilla," he said, "and if Titus cannot be persuaded to give up the Queen of Chalcis, I will convene the Senate."

Domitian bent double with repressed laughter as Clemens joined his affianced. "I have him," he chuckled inwardly, "I have him through Flavia Domitilla. I have long sus-

pected that she is a Christian, and unless they aid me in my scheme, I will send them both to the lions."

The company waited long for Titus ere he rejoined them and led the procession to the banqueting-hall. Berenice did not appear again, and, as the greater number of the guests had no suspicion as to her identity, her absence was not remarked.

Flavia Domitilla had excused herself from the feast on the plea of weariness, but as soon as the revellers were at table, she hastened to the baths provided for the ladies of the villa, where she was told the retiariæ were enjoying the greatest luxury which can follow violent exercise.

Berenice was already robed and reclining in delicious languor in the tepidarium, and Domitilla paused in surprise at the transformation which had taken place in the sad-hearted woman who had so lately sought refuge at her villa.

The burden of years had been lifted, gone with that of terror, and triumph was blended with the complacency with which she regarded herself in a small hand-mirror.

But at the entrance of Domitilla, she tossed the glass aside, and, throwing her arm caress-

ingly about the Princess, led her to her own apartment.

"It is sweet of you, little hostess, to be the first to congratulate me," she said. "Did Titus tell you, or did you guess? I shall not forget, too, that you were good to me before my good fortune came."

"I was indeed drawn to you before I knew you," Domitilla replied. "I cannot help admiring you and believing in you even now;—but, oh, beautiful Queen, I do not come in congratulation, but in warning. This is not good fortune either for you or for my Uncle Titus which brings you together now. You are in greater danger than ever, and are bringing a terrible danger to him. Oh! have pity on him, on us, and on yourself, for you are the only one who can save us all."

"What do you mean?" Berenice asked coldly, and Domitilla unfolded Domitian's plot with the convincing exactitude with which Clemens had just explained it to her. Berenice listened with ever-increasing indignation.

"So!" she exclaimed, "Domitian has made Florus believe that Titus has tricked him, and Florus will lead the Roman populace in a revolt, in which the Emperor and I will be slain."

"But first," Domitilla explained, "he counts on the Senate's deposing Titus, and proclaiming Domitian Emperor."

"Titus is not the fool his brother thinks," Berenice replied triumphantly. "He has foreseen both dangers and forestalled them. As he made clear to me, the Emperor cannot marry me, but there is no obligation put upon him to remain Emperor. Titus, the simple citizen, could wed with whom he pleased. He loves me so utterly that he has determined to abdicate in favour of Domitian and return with me to Chalcis."

Domitilla fell upon her knees in anguish. "Have pity sweet lady on us all, leave us not to the mercy of Domitian," she entreated. "If you had any idea of what Titus has done: how he has saved the finances of the country wrecked by Nero, how he has punished evil-doers, established order, toleration for all religions, and protection for all distressed, how the people worship him and the young look up to him as an example! Think, think what it would mean if Domitian should undo all this, and have pity on Rome."

Berenice laughed. "And shall I have no pity on myself?" she asked. "You seem to have forgotten *me* completely. Is it not

enough that I have relinquished the ambition of becoming empress, that I retire from Rome, thus averting civil war? Have I not proved that I love Titus the man, not Titus the Emperor, and that he loves me? Do you know how he loves me? Not in the vile fashion that Domitian thinks. All the lustful phrensy of youth has gone for us both, quenched with our dead past; but in his heart there remains for me a remorseful pity which is more than human, it is divine. Listen to what he said to me when he followed me from the stadium, and looked into my eyes:

"'Berenice, how you have changed. You must have suffered inexpressibly, it is all written in your bitter, world-aged face. Oh, my poor Berenice, how I pity you. Do not think that I also have not suffered. We have wronged each other cruelly. Would that we had never met, for nought remains but to forgive each other and part, and forget.'

"I told him that I had nothing to forgive, and that not for any peace or bliss would I forget, and looking at me in astonishment, he said, 'If I could believe, could only believe that the love which it seems to me I read through your tears is unfeigned, then I would count it the one thing worth the having in all

my life.' That is what he said, Domitilla, and in some way, I know not how, I convinced him as I wish I could convince you,—for it is true."

Domitilla embraced her tenderly. "I am convinced, Berenice, that above all other things you love his love, but are you sure that you love him?"

"What do you mean?" the other asked. "Is it not the same thing?"

"Forgive me, no,—it gives you rapture to know that he is willing to sacrifice his career and the happiness of thousands of his subjects for you. It is exquisite delight to you to be loved by him, to see the affection in his eyes, to know that his perfect faith in you is proof against all slander, that he is willing to brave death and undeserved infamy for you, and still count himself supremely happy; but do you love him well enough to sacrifice this satisfaction for his best good, that he may complete this great work which he has begun, and live in history as the noblest Emperor that Rome has ever known? Think how he would reverence you in after years for this."

"No," Berenice replied, "I do not so love him. I also love myself a little, and I will not give him up. Besides it would be impossible; if I attempted to show such self-sac-

rifice, he would never permit it, he would only love me all the more. He believes in me; no one can shake his faith, as you have said, and so long as he believes in me, there is no power on earth or in heaven which can compel him to let me go."

Domitilla turned sadly. "I understand," she said, "for I also love,—but I was not thinking of myself alone, or of Clemens, but of the thousands of other loving hearts that must break when Domitian orders the Christians to the lions."

Berenice caught her hand. "Flee with us, both you and Clemens. Why should you stay to be butchered like those sheep?"

"Because they are His sheep, and Clemens is their caretaker. He received the command from Peter, even as Peter from the Master. It is a sacred trust and we who stand near the throne may avert or at least alleviate danger. Farewell, Berenice, forgive me that I have asked too much."

And all that night long, after the lights were extinguished in the great villa, and the guests and even the host slept, Berenice tossed restlessly, repeating the words, "She asks too much. What does she know of love? And she dares to say that I love only myself. I

love him, *him* only; but she asks too much."

Another passion as intense as her love for Titus, Berenice's hate for Domitian, throbbed in her pulses and burned in her brain, and the fierce determination to foil him at any cost became an obsession. "When Titus abdicates and leaves Rome, Domitian will be Emperor; but if Domitian should suddenly die, who then?" and she laughed in triumph as the answer came to her, "Why Flavius Clemens!—Clemens who so well deserves his name,—'the merciful,'—and Domitilla, who has never once thought of this possibility, would be Empress." At that thought her own love and Domitian's murder took upon themselves the aspect of a benefaction to Rome; but almost instantly she realised that the gentle Clemens had not the force of character necessary for governing an Empire. Rome required a *master,* the very master whose wise and powerful hand now held the sceptre, and he must not lay it down.

She robed herself with more than her usual care but mechanically, every faculty of her mind absorbed by the difficult problems before her. The sun was rising, as she drew her curtains, but early as it was, Titus was mounting

his horse in the courtyard below, and he waved his hand to her with a smile, as he rode away toward Rome. Domitian, hidden in the embrasure of his window, watched him depart, wondering what decision was betokened by the stern determination apparent in his every movement. Later in the morning, but as soon as Domitian could arrange to do so, he hastened to Berenice, curious to learn the result of her interview with his brother.

"I have won, and I have not won," she replied, in response to his eager questioning.

"Explain your enigma," he commanded impatiently. "What did Titus say?"

"That he loved me madly—more than his duty, his Empire, or his life."

"Good; then he will marry you?"

"He begged me to be his wife."

"Then you have won indeed. Hail to you, Berenice, Empress of Rome!"

"That is exactly where I have not won. Your brother is an obstinate man. He acknowledged his promise made long ago to marry me so soon as he was free, but he explained clearly that under no circumstances can I be empress. It is contrary to the law, and he, as the great exemplar, forsooth will not be a law-breaker."

"Then he wishes you to be his mistress, not his wife?"

"How little you understand your brother. He proposes to abdicate in your favour, and to return with me to Chalcis."

Domitian uttered an exclamation of surprise, but after a moment's thought replied: "It cannot be, his friends would never permit him to carry out such a wild scheme as this. I myself would be obliged to combat it. If he is so infatuated as to cast away the Empire for your sake, you can knead him as clay in your hands and he will change the law or defy it and proclaim you Augusta."

"Can you not imagine that I care for Titus, for himself alone?"

"No, and if you were so mad, I tell you this romantic scheme is impossible. Florus would kill you before you could embark, and even if you succeeded in carrying off Titus, I should never have a moment's assurance that he would not tire of you and return."

"If I am willing to take that risk," she replied insolently, "I do not see why I should consider you."

He sprang upon her, his hands clutching her throat. "You will promise to carry out my scheme, or I will kill you," he stammered,

beside himself with rage, and only releasing his hold as she made a gesture of assent. He glowered upon her with undisguised hatred, as he strove to regain his self-possession.

She wiped the froth from her lips, terror-stricken to the depths of her cowardly soul; but though her effrontery had vanished, a malignant craft lurked beneath her surrender.

"I will serve you," she said, "but remember, my friend, that I can serve you better alive than dead."

"Good; I am glad to see that you have come to your senses. You angered me past endurance, and I will not promise that I shall take such folly patiently again; but if you can realise that we stand or fall together and will act accordingly, I will protect you."

There was a slight noise in the atrium as of a passing foot-fall, and the drapery in the archway was swayed by a draught from without; but Domitian took no note of it, and Berenice replied with clear, distinct utterance, "We stand or fall together, dear Domitian, but let me understand exactly what you wish me to do, and how far our interests are identical. I was only playing with Titus,—testing my power over him when I suggested that he should abandon Rome. What do I care for

him without the Empire? But for the diadem you are infinitely more to my liking. Still I am not a child to throw away everything for love, forsooth. Was it worth all the pains which I have taken to return to the East no richer than I came and burdened beside with that love-crazed fool? When he comes to claim me, he will find that I have reconsidered the matter, that I will not consent to his abdication. Not because I am ambitious or mercenary. Oh, no! But for his own sake, and that of the people of Rome, I will pretend that the sacrifice would be too great. He must carry out the great reforms which he has inaugurated, and suffer me to creep away and die. You will see that he will be completely duped, and will come to my terms. He is the idol of the people and of the Senate, and he may bend them to his will and I be crowned. But if not, Domitian, if he fails—what then?"

"If he fails, they will assassinate him, and save us the trouble. *That is exactly what I hope will happen.*"

"And me, what will become of me? Will they slay me also?"

"I forgot you," he said frankly. "With your coronation our interests divide, and you complicate the situation—still you deserve reward.

I fear we must not call in the assistance of the Roman populace, they are apt to go too far. I will stand by my brother, the Senate *must* accept you, and then, when Titus has made your position secure, *you* must see to it that some sudden illness removes Titus. And so, all hail Berenice Augusta! May your reign be without end and his a short one, for I swear that when mine begins, I will divorce Domitia, and you shall be my Empress. And so, beautiful Berenice, forgive my late vehemence and greet me as brother and lover."

She yielded her lips loathingly, but as they stood in this loveless embrace, the tapestry was thrust aside by an imperious hand, and Titus stood before them.

"Your lover doubtless, but never your brother," he said coldly. "Domitian, you are sheltered by that name; for the sake of our mother I spare your life, but henceforth remember that your every act is watched."

Berenice flashed the craven a look of triumph which told Domitian as he slunk self-betrayed from his brother's presence that she had deliberately ruined herself in order to ruin him. It was a costly vengeance, but it sustained her like some powerful drug and enabled her to play the tragic comedy to the end.

"Berenice," said Titus, and his voice even now had in it more of anguish than reproach, "why have you done this, since you must have known that only you yourself could have killed my faith and love?"

Her heart cried out within her, "Ask the Princess Domitilla. She will understand; perhaps after I have gone she will make you understand that it was because I loved *you* more than your love." He might have read this answer in her eyes had she not covered them with her hands, as she stood before him silently accepting her doom.

"You have spoken truly," Titus said sternly, "your interests were the same, and you fall together. Cæcina will escort you to Antium, whence you will sail for Judea, unburdened by the love-sick fool, who thought to renounce his Empire for your sake. And so farewell, and let me never look upon your face again."

SHRINE AND RUINS OF THE HOUSE OF THE VESTALS—COLUMNS OF TEMPLE OF CASTOR AND POLLUX—ROMAN FORUM

CHAPTER V

THE NAMELESS PEDESTAL

A SILENCE which could be felt, more sinister than any uproar, paralysed the tongues and hearts of the excitable Roman populace. More poignant than the universal grief which had recently expressed itself in the swelling wail that followed the funeral procession of their loved Emperor Titus, more appalling than any menacing snarl of rage which greeted a besieging host, this unnatural quiet told of a deed of unutterable horror and unendurable disgrace. The entire city had been stunned by a sinister rumour that the beloved and revered Cornelia, Abbess of the Vestals, had been arraigned on the charge of having violated her vow of purity and was being tried for her life behind locked doors at the villa of the Emperor Domitian. None

believed her guilty; it was notorious that Domitian had pursued her openly and that she had repulsed and defied him, and equally evident that this was his revenge. But it was incredible that the judges would lend themselves to so infamous a crime as to defame the character of an innocent woman and condemn her to the most horrible of deaths.

Not even when the word flew from mouth to mouth that the crypt in which she was to be buried alive was actually being dug in the centre of the Campus Sceleratus, could the populace realise the truth. It must be for some other purpose, the imagination refused to picture so monstrous a villainy. Seeking for some news a crowd had gathered in the early dawn in front of the House of the Vestals,—that mysterious convent-like abode so jealously guarded that no man might enter, not even though he were a physician and a priestess lay in mortal illness,—a crowd which gazed with incredulous dismay through the wide-open doorway into the magnificent atrium at a sacrilege unprecedented in the history of Rome. Not a Vestal was to be seen, but between the columns of rosy corallina breccia and leek-green cipollino, which supported the two-storied arcade that encircled

SUPPOSED TEMPLE OF VESTA, NEAR THE FOUNTAIN OF THE TRITONS

the hall, were ranged in stately procession portrait statues of the former abbesses (Vestales Maximæ), with inscriptions carved upon the pedestals, which were the pride of the priestesses, for the names, Flavia Publicia, Celia Claudiana, Numisia Maximilia, and others as aristocratic, represented the noblest families of Rome.

Last in the proud array stood the statue of their present Abbess, and a squad of workmen under the direction of the common executioner had thrown a noose over its neck and were dragging it from its base, while a stone mason was chiselling the name from the pedestal and pretorians sent by the Emperor were guarding the portal from any sudden onslaught by the indignant onlookers.

As the statue crashed upon the marble pavement, they surged forward and one more fearless than the rest demanded, "What does this mean?"

"It means," replied one of the guards, "that the guilty woman is even now being punished and you will be too late to see her inhumation if you linger here."

With a cry of horror, the threatening mob instantly abandoned its intention of chastising the workmen, and hurried toward the place of

execution. The endeavour of the authorities by this desecration of the sanctuary of the Vestals to draw attention from the judicial murder which was now being committed had failed, for an immense concourse, distracted by sorrow and terror, had swarmed to the Campus Sceleratus and, held back by the soldiers, gazed weeping at the inhuman spactacle.

A hearse, covered by a black pall, had been borne into the centre of the field, where around a yawning pit stood the officers whose duty it was to carry out the sentence. The pall was lifted, the public executioners cut the leather thongs which bound the victim, and the high priest assisted Cornelia to rise. She was seen by all to lift her arms toward the sky as though protesting her innocence before the high gods. Then calmly she descended the ladder to her living tomb.

Her veil caught but as the executioner endeavoured to loosen it she waved him back with dignity, disengaging it herself. So overwhelming, so awful, and above all so sudden had been this deed that the death-like stillness which betokened a paralysis of thought continued until the keystone was lowered to its place in the dome of the tomb, and the dull

SCHOOL OF THE VESTAL VIRGINS
From the painting by H. Le Roux
(With permission of Ad. Braun et Cie.)

thud of the falling clods was heard upon its roof.

Then, as the crowd broke up, howls of rage and wails and curses mingled in a roar which caused the very earth to tremble and must have been heard by the buried woman herself. But this thunderous indignation was as impotent as it was noisy. Too cowed to rescue Cornelia or to pull down the Emperor's palatial villa upon his head, the mob vented its fury upon the less guilty Celer, who had thought to purchase his life by falsely confessing himself guilty when charged with being the Vestal's paramour—and dragging the perjured wretch through the Forum, they flogged him to death in the Comitium. Domitian sent no order to oppose their brief rage, well knowing that so it would work itself off and his own safety be assured.

And yet there were some in Rome who truly loved Cornelia—the Princess Flavia and her husband who had risked their lives in vain appeal to the Emperor, and one more devoted who had even planned a rescue, which had been discovered and foiled at the last moment. Only one man in the city still laboured with a phrensied devotion that was very near to insanity upon a scheme which he

confessed to himself was but a forlorn hope.

This man was the Greek artist Askletarion, who could never forget that he owed his life to Cornelia, who had met him as he was being led to execution and, exercising her privilege as Abbess of the Vestals, had commanded the guards to set him free.

She had not rescued him from death from any chance whim, or simply from her natural kindness of heart, but because having carefully followed his trial, she believed him innocent of the charge of having been accessory to the mysterious illness which had carried the Emperor Titus to the grave and placed his brother Domitian upon the throne.

Askletarion, from devotion to his patron, had abandoned his painting to tend Titus in his long agony, which, according to the diagnosis of his physicians, was caused by an ulcer in the brain.

Titus himself believed that the excruciating pain betokened the presence of a poisonous insect gnawing day and night, except when it stopped to listen to the blows of a blacksmith upon an anvil at his bedside.

There were those, however, who darkly hinted poison, and Domitian, to turn suspicion

from himself, pretended to believe that the insect described by his brother, or some powder of equally malignant character, had been inhaled from roses brought to him by Askletarion as a parting gift from Berenice when, repudiated by Titus, she returned to Judea.

Askletarion had been condemned to death as her accomplice, and though rescued by Cornelia, felt that Domitian would not respect her vindication, and judged it prudent to disappear from Rome. Not until it was rumoured that the Abbess of the Vestals was being tried for her life, was it known by his former friends that he had been all the while in the city, following the humble occupation of an excavator of drains, living an underground life and on his rare appearance disguised beyond recognition by mire and clay.

His gratitude to Cornelia had determined him to run all risks in her behalf, and as he was known in the department of public works as a skilful excavator, he had applied for and obtained the position of grave-digger for executed criminals. To him, in fact, as his first work had been confided the digging of the crypt in which Cornelia had been buried. So rapid had been the progress of events that

he had had no time to enlist accomplices before ordered to the execution of the task.

The Campus Sceleratus was a lonely plain of vast extent, bounded on the east by the city wall, on the north by the broad Via Nomentana, leading to the gate of the same name, and on the west and south-west by other fields belonging to scattered houses on the Viminal Hill. On the south-east the city wall made a detour to include the Pretorian camp, whose parade-ground was practically a continuation of the Campus Sceleratus, every foot of which was under the constant observation of these soldiers, noted for their unreasoning fidelity to the Emperor.

Except for the barracks of the Pretorians, the spot was terribly isolated; the nearest buildings, a row of shabby houses, were in the opposite direction facing the Via Nomentana, several hundred feet from the vault, with no irregularity in the contour of the land, no shrub or object of any kind in the intervening waste. The ground would be guarded after Cornelia's burial until every possibility of lingering life must be relinquished, and as Askletarion surveyed the spot, he realised the hopelessness of all rescue.

If it came at all, it must be through a sub-

terranean passage, not from the direction of the city wall, whose deep sub-structure barred the free campagna, nor from those far distant dwellings to the south-west, but from the cellar of one of the houses on the Via Nomentana, a great thoroughfare always crowded during the day by wayfarers entering or leaving the city gate. But these houses were huddled so closely together that the noise of excavation at night must be heard by the neighbours, and how would it be possible to carry away the earth displaced from so public a place? Even if these difficulties could be surmounted, a week at least would be required to open a tunnel from the cellar to the tomb, and long before it could be completed, Cornelia would have perished from want of air.

In spite of the impossibility of the task, Askletarion's eyes persistently scanned the surrounding landscape for some sign of hope, and suddenly with a great leap of the heart he recognised it.

A slender thread of green crossed the Campus from a market garden on the Viminal a half-mile away, passing not ten feet from the spot where he was digging, straight on to the city wall. Askletarion's experience told him

that this tiny strip of fresh verdure in the midst of the arid waste indicated the presence of water beneath the surface, possibly a drain from the irrigation ditches of the distant garden, and he could scarcely wait to inspect its outlet until his task was finished and the excavators gave place to the masons, who were to wall the interior of the tomb. His examination showed an orifice in the city wall, hardly a foot in diameter, from which water dripped, but in so slender a stream that Askletarion argued that the waste water occupied but a small portion of the sewer, and that there must be a current of air in the upper part. If this current could be connected by piping with Cornelia's tomb, a system of ventilation would be established and her life prolonged while a subterranean passage could be dug from the cellar of one of the houses on the Via Nomentana. He turned into this street and was overjoyed to discover a vacant house bearing the placard "For Sale." The door was unlocked, and, entering, he found it admirably suited his purpose—for it backed upon the Campus, and the cellar extended through to the rear.

As he left the premises, he was gruffly accosted by a man demanding his business in the

house. Askletarion replied that he had been sent by his employer, who intended to open a wine-shop in the lower story. "He is too late," retorted the other. "The house was mine, but I have just sold it."

"Doubtless to my master," Askletarion asserted glibly.

"The new owner is no publican," the man replied. "He is evidently a wealthy patrician, for he paid all demands in full without dispute, and said nothing about the shop, his only concern being to take possession of the upper rooms to-morrow. You, from the mud and soil with which you are bedaubed, are no gentleman's servant, but a digger of sewers."

"Exactly," replied Askletarion, "how clever you are. I am an excavator, and have been engaged by my master Corvinus Sextus, wine merchant, to enlarge the cellar toward the rear, in order that it will be possible to store more wine."

"But that is not the name of the gentleman who purchased the house."

"Of course not. I did not intend to say that my master had bought the entire property; doubtless he has only leased the lower story and the cellar from your fine gentleman. At any rate, the wine is on its way from the

vineyards, and I have been sent to provide accommodation for it."

"You will have to prove that to-morrow to the new owner," grumbled the man. "In the meantime take yourself off, for I am going to lock the doors."

This rebuff did not in the least discourage Askletarion. There would be time enough to overcome the difficulties in the way of securing the house. It was enough to know that it existed, but the ventilating pipes must be laid that very night.

The young man's resourceful mind instantly formulated a scheme whereby he might be permitted by the guards to re-enter the Campus and take up the work which he had reported as completed. He first sought an interview with the director of the fossores and communicated his discovery of the sewer.

"I noticed that strip of grass," replied the official, "and drew the same conclusion, but what of it?"

"Only this," replied Askletarion, "the water is seeping through from that broken pipe, and before morning will have forced itself through the fresh mortar and have filled the vault."

The chief of excavators swore roundly.

"And great credit I will receive for a piece of work like that! Take men, dig down and repair the sewer. I am too weary to go myself, but I will write an order to the guard to permit you to continue the work into the night if necessary."

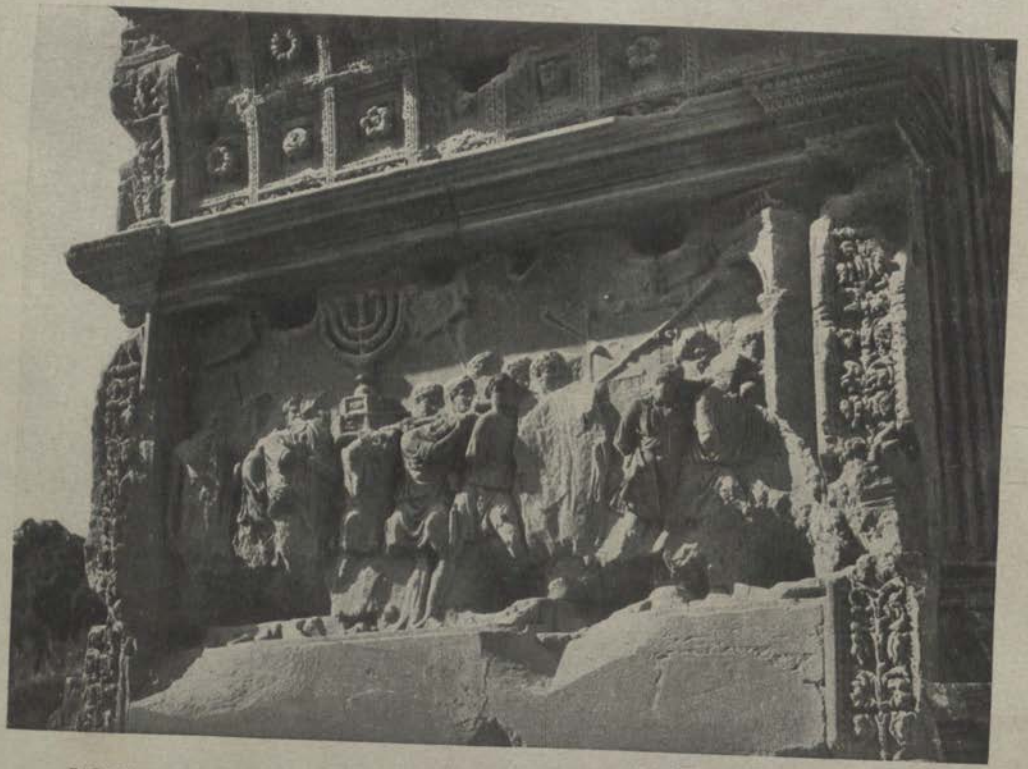
Askletarion had succeeded beyond his hopes. The installation of the ventilating apparatus could be quickly accomplished, and he had even a few hours at his disposal before he could begin the work. He ate mechanically as one might thrust fuel into an engine, but he could not sleep, and as he reflected on the difficulties before him, they grew more formidable.

The impossibility of carrying out unaided all the details of the enterprise was evident. "I must have help," he said to himself, "not only strong arms to dig the tunnel, but to convey the Lady Cornelia to some place of safety far from Rome. I must find influential and wealthy friends willing to risk even life itself in her behalf."

One such friend he had immediately called to mind, the pretor, Valerius Licianus, but he had heard that Domitian had profited by his absence from Rome to accomplish this infamous crime. Perhaps it was well that he was not

at hand, for he would be the first to be suspected and watched. All of Cornelia's relatives and known friends were powerless to aid her for the same reason; from what quarter then could help come? While asking himself this question, as he left the offices of the department of public works, he had been walking toward the Porta Latina. His footsteps had taken this direction, an opposite one from the Campus Sceleratus, quite unconsciously to himself, but in obedience to force of old habit, for it was a way he had daily taken when, in the employ of Titus, he had decorated the villa of the Princess Flavia Domitilla.

"Whither am I wandering?" he asked himself suddenly, and in the same breath exclaimed with emotion, "The Villa of Unhappy Love," for the words struck him as an answer to both of his questions. The spot was most unlikely to be suspected as affording harbourage to the condemned woman, for it was owned and occupied by members of Domitian's own family, Flavius Clemens, and his wife Flavia Domitilla. It was an open secret that they were Christians, and they would not be suspected of harbouring a priestess of the pagan religion. But this very fact gave Askletarion hope.



BAS-RELIEF WITHIN THE ARCH OF TITUS, REPRESENTING THE SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICK AND OTHER SPOILS OF THE HEBREW TEMPLE

Above their heads also, suspended by a hair, hung the sword of persecution and they would know how to sympathise with this innocent victim of the Emperor's injustice.

The Princess was a friend of Cornelia's, though this fact was not generally known, and on listening to Askletarion's scheme, she exclaimed with eagerness:

"We are working to the same end. I can only confide to you that the tomb will be opened on the night after the living burial. It will not be necessary to dig the long tunnel from the house in the Via Nomentana, but your ingenious arrangement for furnishing fresh air is exactly what is needed, for we feared that Cornelia might have suffocated before she could be removed."

"But, dear Lady," Askletarion asked in wonder, "how will it be possible to rescue her when the spot will be securely guarded by soldiers?"

"Of the fourth legion who are devoted to the death to the commander who led them to the sack of Jerusalem."

"But our lord Titus, alas, is dead."

"Their general, yes, but not the centurion who, as a comrade, shared their hardships throughout the entire campaign and mounted

the scaling ladder at their head at the taking of the Tower of Antonia."

"Valerius Licianus, for whom they would give their lives, has been sent to Africa by the Emperor in anticipation of such an attempt as this."

"Valerius was sent indeed, and had set out upon his voyage, but three days ago, when my husband first learned from Domitian that he had resolved on Cornelia's death, he hurried to Porto and found that Valerius had been obliged to put back to repair injuries which the galley had sustained during a storm. They arrived here at dawn to-day. We have kept Valerius in hiding, but my husband has brought several of his most trusted soldiers to him and has succeeded in having them appointed as guards. The details are all agreed upon. Horses will be waiting saddled in the stables of the barracks, just outside the city gate, and the devoted guards will act as Cornelia's escort and will flee with her, deserting to a man, for they are all of the opinion that such an act of infamy on the part of the Emperor absolves them from their allegiance."

Askletarion, overjoyed, fell upon his knees and kissed the hem of the robe of Flavia Domitilla. "I will hasten now to my labour,"

he said, "for the sun has set, and the masons will have finished their work. Let me take with me your steward Stephanus; he is faithful and a man of Herculean strength, and can render me invaluable assistance."

"He shall go with you and shall provide you with whatever you need. Shall you be at the——"

"At the murder to-morrow? Yes, I must not lose any opportunity for observing. Some circumstance might occur which could be used to advantage."

"My husband will be there; follow him when all is over, and tell him if you have been successful in your scheme."

So far fortune had favoured Askletarion, and the task of installing his apparatus was accomplished with less difficulty than he had anticipated. The sentry accepted without questions the order of the chief of the fossores, leaving him and his assistant unwatched, while they laid the pipes, and removed from the wall of the vault two stones, resetting in their places others in which small holes had been drilled. These Askletarion concealed behind the furnishings of the crypt, which had already arrived, for by ancient custom a cot-bed, an oil lamp, a loaf of bread, and a jug of water

were placed within the tomb. This pretence of humanity was in reality but a refinement of cruelty, lengthening as it did the sufferings of the condemned, but in the present instance the excavator was grateful for their presence, and determined to light the lamp before closing the sepulchre that the horror of darkness might not be added to Cornelia's anxieties during the few hours which must elapse before her rescue, though the Princess had assured him that she would be informed of her friends' efforts.

Their work at the tomb was completed, morning was dawning, and Askletarion and Stephanus left the Campus, hopeful but too much excited to rest. As they walked across the field in the direction of the city, they were halted by a band of soldiers from the Pretorian camp. Askletarion showed the permit of his superior allowing them to work at night, but his heart sank as he recognised the officer in command of the detachment. It was Gessius Florus, noted for his merciless brutality, not to men alone, but more particularly to women, whom he regarded as the cause of all evil.

Florus did not, however, appear to recognise him, though he ordered both fossores to return with him to the vault, and immediately

discovered that a trench had been dug and filled in between the sewer and the sepulchre. This circumstance could not fail to excite his suspicion and he scrutinised Askletarion keenly, while demanding sharply the reason of this connection.

"The water had been percolating through the loose soil into the vault," Askletarion replied, "and I wished to pack the earth more firmly."

"Your worship may observe for yourself how much moisture has already penetrated the wall," said Stephanus, pointing to a small muddy pool on the floor where he had slily emptied the gourd of water which he had brought to use in mixing the mortar.

Florus regarded the two men keenly. "Open the sewer," he commanded; "this may be a part of the scheme of rescue of which we have heard."

The soldiers watched while Stephanus reopened the sewer a little above, and then a little below the spot where the ventilating pipes tapped it. Florus also scrutinised the cutting and seemed reassured.

"Nevertheless," he said to his men, "it will be well to make a thorough examination of the premises beyond the market gardens irri-

gated by this drain and also to place a patrol outside the city wall. Miners might follow the sewer from either direction directly to the vault."

Askletarion could not repress a sardonic smile. "Is there then any one so mad as to attempt such an impossibility?"

"Something is on foot," replied the other. "The fourth legion, which was to have furnished the death-watch, has been ordered to make a forced march to-night to some fortress in the south of Italy, and we have been detailed to this business in their place."

"You go on duty early," remarked Askletarion. "I understood that the execution was not to take place until noon."

"Tho hour has been changed. According to law, the ceremony must be public, but it seemed undesirable to allow a mob to gather. As you see the troops are approaching, and will form in a hollow square about the field, ready to charge in case of any disturbance. You may remain, since you will have to fill in the earth after the culprit is housed; but stand aside until you are summoned—for the procession is coming."

In fact, in spite of the precautions taken, the information given by the soldier at the

palace of the Vestals had flown from mouth to mouth and an ever-increasing multitude was escorting the doomed woman to the fatal field.

"You must stay," whispered Stephanus to Askletarion, "but I will go and notify my master and the Lord Licianus, who may not have heard of this change in the hour."

"Yes, go," replied Askletarion, "and fail not to tell them that the plot has been discovered and the fourth legion removed. I greatly fear that the only hope now left is to tunnel to the vault according to my original plan. Confer with the Princess and meet me at that vacant house on the Via Nomentana."

Stephanus disappeared and the heart-rending tragedy took place as has been described with all the sickening details which history has so circumstantially preserved.

The family of Cornelia and the Vestals, who were commanded to be present at the execution of their Abbess, took leave of her upon their knees. A Greek girl named Euphrosyne, the slave of Cornelia, presented her with a lily, which the condemned woman accepted declaring the weeping girl free. Then, pausing for an instant to protest her innocence, she gave a last longing look in the direction of the Via Nomentana and descended the ladder.

Askletarion's eyes had followed Cornelia's farewell glance and he saw, standing at an open upper window of the vacant house, a man holding a lily similar to the one given to Cornelia. The man's face was deadly pale. As the unfortunate woman lifted her hand, as Askletarion was now sure, in signal to him, he threw up both arms with a gesture of despair, staggered, and fell backward into the room. He had only appeared for an instant, but Askletarion even at that distance had recognised Valerius Licianus.

With feverish impatience Askletarion waited while the masons closed the aperture in the roof of the vault, and hastily filled in the earth, while the crowd loaded him with their imprecations. He was in real danger, for their blood was up, and if a voice had not cried, "Celer, let us find the dastard Celer," the mob might have torn in pieces the innocent grave-digger. He followed in their rear and diverging from them after he had passed the guards made his way to the house.

The main door was locked, but he forced that of the cellar ran to the upper story, and as he anticipated, found Valerius Licianus lying unconscious upon the floor. It was long before Askletarion succeeded in restoring

him, longer still before Valerius could comprehend that there was still hope. He begged insistently for "the phial," that he might die with Cornelia.

"What phial?" Askletarion demanded.

"The phial in the lily," the other replied, and tearing apart the petals of the flower which he had held, he would, but for Askletarion's resistance, have possessed himself of a phial of poison hidden in its heart.

"Gather together your faculties," exclaimed the excavator, "and try to understand that this is no time for suicide. Cornelia is safe for the present, and we need your help to perfect her rescue."

An expression of unspeakable delight irradiated the face of Valerius for a moment, and then changed to one of despair. "Miserable wretch that I am!" he cried. "I have defeated all your plans. I have killed her."

"How killed her?"

"Did not Euphrosyne give her a lily? She did, she did. I saw it in her hand. That lily, like this one, contained a poison so powerful that he who swallows it dies instantly, and there is no remedy."

Askletarion uttered a cry of rage, and seiz-

ing Valerius by the shoulders flung him upon the floor.

"Yes, kill me," replied Valerius; "I do not wish to live, but first hear me. When I learned that our plot had failed, that my faithful soldiers had been sent to Tusculum, that the execution had been hastened, and there seemed no possibility of rescue,—rather than that the woman I idolised should suffer lingering agony, I provided her with the means of painless death. I wrapped the phial in a tiny scroll of parchment on which I explained all, and promised also to take the poison and meet her on the other side of the door of Death. She is not the woman to hesitate. Without doubt her gentle ghost is now wondering that I have not kept my tryst."

"It may be," suggested the other, "that she has not discovered either the phial or the letter."

"Euphrosyne promised to tell her mistress that there was a message within the lily. She saw me and she lifted the flower in token that she comprehended."

Askletarion felt that this was probably the case, but he had no intention of abating any effort.

"If you reproach yourself for one blunder,"

he said, "let her not die because of another. There will be time enough for despair when we find your fears verified. A hundred things may have happened to foil your insane project. The lily may have been examined, and the phial removed. I have paced the distance, determined the direction, and have calculated that six days and nights will be ample time. The lady Cornelia has food and water sufficient to sustain life. The lamp will go out, it is true——"

"And in those hours of darkness and despair, she may lose her reason. The ventilating apparatus may be discovered, or rats may reach her through it."

"Man, man," cried Askletarion, losing all patience, "admit not the possibility of failure, but consider how we may prosecute the work before us.

"First of all, that we may be uninterrupted, we must lease the building from its present owner."

"I am the owner," said Licianus. "I purchased it yesterday in order to have a rendezvous for my troop."

"Good!" exclaimed Askletarion, "then we may consider the next point," but at that instant their conversation was interrupted by an

altercation in the street below. A cart, laden with wine-kegs, had halted in front of the house, and the voice of the former owner was heard protesting:

"It is all very well for you to say that you intend to open a wine-shop here, but I tell you that you are not the man to whom I sold the premises yesterday."

"Come down at once," Askletarion whispered to Licianus, "and agree to everything I say. That is Stephanus, who has been sent by the Princess Flavia; this is a part of our plan."

Dragging the wondering man with him, Askletarion hastily appeared before the disputants. "It is all right, my friend," he assured the landlord. "Here is your gentleman, who has leased the property to my master yonder, as I told you yesterday."

"Precisely," corroborated Valerius, "I forgot to mention it to you. I consider myself fortunate in having so honest a tenant, as I am leaving Rome for an indefinite period," and handing the key of the house to Stephanus, he hastily mingled with the throng in the street and disappeared.

It was Askletarion's turn to be surprised by this turn of affairs, but the sudden defection

of Valerius was immediately explained by the arrival upon the scene of Florus, whose recognition he dreaded, and with good reason, for the officer had been informed that Valerius Licianus had been seen at one of the windows, and had come to make a thorough inspection of the building. Florus examined the upper story with especial care, possessing himself of the lily which Askletarion had neglected to hide, and listening with interest to the landlord's information that the new owner of the house had just left the city. He even descended to the cellar, where fortunately the work had not as yet been begun, sounded the walls, and left the house, his mind apparently so preoccupied with the mysterious absentee proprietor that he did not notice Askletarion, who was moving in the casks. The inspection over, Stephanus closed the street door and regarded his friend with triumph. "We can begin now to dig?" he asked.

"Impossible," Askletarion replied; "even though the landlord and the neighbours might believe that we were simply enlarging the cellar, the suspicions of Florus would be roused at the first appearance of fresh earth."

"None will appear," replied Stephanus.

"What will you do with it? To dig our tunnel, we must remove more earth than this house can hold."

Stephanus grinned broadly. "When you helped roll down the casks, you must have noticed that all except the one which we left in the shop were empty. We will fill them with earth, the cart will return to-morrow, and carry them away. What more natural than that casks supposed to be full of wine should be delivered at the shop and the empty ones returned? The idea is not mine, but the Princess Flavia's with whom I discussed it. The boy who is conducting the cart back to the villa will inform her that all is well, and more fossores will join us after nightfall. Valerius Licianus will also return, for his announcement of his departure was merely to throw Florus off his scent. So now to our work."

For three days the excavating proceeded without interruption, relays of fresh men constantly relieving those exhausted by the hard labour, while mechanics installed shelving in the shop and repaired the roof, keeping up all the while an incessant pounding of metal to cover the noise of the pickaxes and shovels.

On the third night, the conspirators were startled by a loud knocking at the street door,

and the persistent demands of a drunken roisterer for wine.

"The shop is not yet ready to serve customers," Askletarion replied from the window.

"I have already told him so," replied a patrol, appearing from the shadow of the opposite house. "Come with me sirrah, to the guard-house, you have had too much wine already."

"As you will, but first let us drink," insisted the pretended drunkard, trolling forth a convivial song; and Askletarion, who recognised the voice of Valerius, hastened to unbar the door and serve refreshment. Licianus was in an exalted mood and recklessly plied his captor with drink until the latter staggered away, swearing eternal friendship.

"A narrow escape," commented Valerius. "That is Florus, and he knows me well. Thrice I have attempted to return and have nearly run into his arms. My disguise tonight must be good since he did not recognise me, but in future, deal with him for me, for I must not again run the risk of discovery."

"Nor I," replied Askletarion, "for it was he who was leading me to execution, when Cornelia met us and set me free. He believed me guilty and must hate Cornelia also for

allowing the man whom he believes to be the murderer of his beloved commander Titus to escape his vengeance. Our only hope is in his stupidity, for I have talked with him and he did not appear to remember me."

As the days passed, Askletarion became convinced that Florus, who was now an old man, was losing his faculties, for though he was constantly on guard, messengers from the Princess Flavia came and went without detection.

One of these, Euphrosyne, Cornelia's former slave, brought the best of news. On the day of the execution, Florus had stopped her and had examined the lily which she was carrying to Cornelia, and had removed the phial of poison; her mistress would therefore live.

Hope rose once more in the breast of Valerius. He laboured incessantly and feverishly and but for Askletarion's insistence would have taken no food. It could hardly be said that either of them slept, though Askletarion husbanded the strength of the young patrician with the care of a mother. There was something phenomenal in their association, for, although each worshipped Cornelia in his own way, there was no tinge of jealousy in their feelings. Valerius recognised that Askletarion's devotion was not love, but an

all-consuming gratitude, a self-obliterating loyalty which served with no hope of reward other than the rescue which was the immediate object of his endeavour. It was Askletarion's seemingly perfect confidence that each stroke of the pickaxe was bringing them nearer to the goal of their hearts' desire which endowed Valerius with courage and endurance, while it was only the steady grinding toil, the necessity for stroke upon stroke, that kept Askletarion himself from insanity.

On the fifth day, just as he was beginning to feel the assurance which he had simulated, the quick ear of the excavator caught muffled sounds, which caused him to reel backward as though mortally wounded.

Somewhere in the immediate vicinity others were digging. It was hardly possible that another rescue party was at work, and the alternative that a countermine was being prepared filled him with the deepest apprehension. If he could hear these excavators, then they could hear him, and he ceased digging until all was quiet. At midnight his worst fears were realised. Under his cautious blows a large quantity of loose earth was dislodged, and at the same time there was a rattling noise behind him. He was standing in a trench cut

at right angles to his tunnel and open to the sky, and when he attempted to retrace his steps, he found his retreat cut off by an iron grating, which had descended like a portcullis from the roof of his tunnel.

He was trapped, and blinded by the glare of a torch thrust in the earth at the farther edge of the ditch. A low mocking laugh came to him through the dazzling brilliance and the voice of Florus ordered him to surrender. Askletarion spread his hands desparingly, for his only weapon, the pick, had been buried under the fall of earth.

Florus strode nearer and regarded him with an expression of grim triumph.

"Nay," he said, "do not climb out of the ditch. I have reasons for not desiring your nearer company. Yes, it is I, my clever sapper. Did you suppose that I did not recognise you and Valerius, and comprehend your scheme from the first? I saw you behind the casks in the wine-cellar, and knew when you began work. I understood perfectly why the surprisingly large number of kegs rolled in each morning were empty, and those rolled out were heavy. I listened to your digging and gauged exactly its progress. I knew when to profit by your mid-

day rest to install the grating, which would fall behind you, the instant that you cut through into this ditch which intersects your course. I calculated the time at which this would happen. You are a little late, for I have been expecting you some minutes."

"If you knew all this, why did you not arrest us before?" Askletarion asked bitterly; "was it to play with us, to exhaust our strength and dash our hopes? I warn you that you will not capture Valerius. If he cannot escape he will kill himself rather than fall into the power of Domitian."

"And wisely, but listen Askletarion, I have not played with you. Incredible as it may seem to you, I am your friend. I led you out to die because I believed that you were the accomplice of that siren Berenice in the murder of the only man I have ever loved. I have changed my opinion since then, and believe that if the Emperor Titus died not as the physicians say, the man who compassed his death was the one who most profited by it. It was the clear insight of the noble woman in this grave, who dared to stand by her convictions, that set me to thinking; a business to which I am not accustomed. I have slain too many innocent people in my time by

blindly obeying orders, and if your bungling work had not been discovered by others and reported to Domitian, I would have allowed you to carry out your scheme as you planned it."

"It is easy to say so now that you have foiled us," Askletarion replied incredulously. "I have little cause to believe in your friendship."

"But you shall have more. The Emperor commanded me to surround the vault with a deep trench: I have had it dug in such a way as to shorten your work. At your normal rate of progression, as I reported, you would reach the vault by *to-morrow* night at this time. Observe:—the crypt is not in the centre of the space surrounded by this ditch, on the contrary, the trench grazes it on the other side, while it crosses your tunnel here, fully twenty feet from the tomb. Now raise your head just sufficiently to look over the Campus. We are entirely alone. I have stationed the guards on the outside of the plain beyond the reach of our voices. As long as you remain in that trench, you are invisible to any one on the Campus. Creep around in it to this side, and you will see that an hour's digging will open the vault. I will haul up the portcullis and

you will do well to return to the house and bring your best workmen to make a speedy end. I am glad that I encountered you, a man willing to listen to reason, and not that hot-headed Valerius, who would have made a noisy onslaught upon me and have ruined all."

Askletarion, dazed and wondering, obeyed the instructions of Florus, for he was convinced of his sincerity, though not until long afterward did he fully understand that from the moment that Cornelia had crossed his path like an angel of light Florus had received a revelation of the dignity, the intrepidity, and the disinterestedness of which a woman could be capable, and had devoted his life to her defence.

He it was who had been her providence, correcting the mistakes of her rescuers, influencing the Emperor to assign to him the post of captain of the guard, removing the poison and the despairing letter of Valerius from the heart of the lily and substituting an assurance of rescue.

He had done even more, for on discovering the ventilating pipe, he had put it to uses never imagined by Askletarion, uncovering it each night and using it as a speaking tube through which he conversed with Cornelia, keeping up

her courage through the days of waiting, and sustaining her physical strength by pouring through it broth and wine.

As Valerius stumbled into the glare of the torch, he greeted Florus with incoherent thanks, but added, "It is too good to be true; something tells me that in spite of all your kindness we shall not find her alive."

For answer, Florus bade him place his ear to the pipe. Faint but clear fluttered the answer to his agonised call.

"Valerius, is it thou? I thank the gods that thou hast come in time, for I am nearly spent."

With trembling hands they tore away the stones and found her lying with a smile upon her lips—but with closed eyes—unconscious of their presence.

"She is dying," cried Valerius, "she has gone. Oh, my love, my love, am I then too late?"

"No," answered Florus, "lift her out into the open air. Here is water. There, she is reviving. Carry her quickly through the tunnel to the house, but do not leave it until I replace the guard on the Via Nomentana."

A half-hour later Florus entered the wine-

shop. "How is the Lady Cornelia?" he asked eagerly.

"Still too weak to walk," Valerius replied. "My yacht is waiting at Porto to take us to Sicily, but how can I remove her until she is stronger?—and every moment is precious."

"I have provided for that," Florus replied. "The litter of the Princess Flavia with her four Nubian bearers is waiting outside the Nomentan gate. I will summon it to the door and will lend Valerius a horse and myself escort you to the Villa Amaranthiana. No more shall it be known by us as the Villa of Unhappy Love, for the Princess hopes to persuade you to be wedded by her husband, since Clemens is a bishop of the Christian religion. In your Sicilian refuge, think of Florus, and suffer me now to kiss the hem of Cornelia's robe, for she has taught me the possibility of goodness."

Later Florus reported to the Emperor that the attempt at rescue had failed, the excavators having abandoned their enterprise on reaching the ditch which intersected their tunnel. The wall of the tomb had been so cleverly mended that no suspicion of its having been broken into was aroused. The ventilating apparatus having been removed, it was the universal opinion that Cornelia must have perished

several days previously, and the vault was not even opened to verify this conclusion.

As for Florus, his reputation is still unshaken as having been, with no redeeming instance in his career, the most brutal and, next to Domitian, the most merciless monster of his time.

CHAPTER VI

A DOG OF BRITAIN

I

WHICH TREATS OF DRUIDS AND DRYADS AND LOVE 'NEATH THE QUICKEN TREES

I laid the hero in the hollow rock at the roar of the mighty stream. There, near the broken shield, lay hairy Bran, the white-breasted dog of Fillan. No blast came over the heath known to bounding Bran. He had missed the chief and searched him along the wind. Green thorn-tree of the hill of ghosts, heard he the spirits' wind skirts rustling in thy leaves?

He thought the hunter slept, winds lifted at times his locks. Pleasant from the way of the desert the voice of music came. It seemed at first the noise of a stream far distant upon the rock. It was the voice of the bard and the trembling harp. They came with blue-eyed Ferad Artho. Gladness rose like beams on a cloudy day. White-breasted Bran bounded for joy. He came but looked back-

ward to the cave where the hero lay, for he, too, was wont to stride at morn to the dewy bed of the roe.

With morning lead Ferad Artho to the echoing hall of the Kings of Erin, but let not the fallen be forgotten, they that were mighty, the stately forms of old.

OSSIAN.

FERAD ARTHO am I, son of the murdered Cormac, High King of Erin. O'er young to reign I was when my father's cousin, Fingal, King of the Gaels, chastised the chiefs who did the black deed, so that Fingal took me with him to Morven to be bred up as his foster son, until the time of times should call me to my own.

Sad was the heart of Fingal, for Fillan, his youngest son, who fell in Erin, fighting my battle, but when it was told the King that faithful Bran (Fillan's great deerhound, who found the body of his master on the red field of battle, and would neither be beaten nor tempted by food from his grave), that Bran of the human heart had leapt upon me when I called him, licking the tears from my cheeks, and had followed me ever after as though I had been Fillan himself,—then I say Fingal also took me to his heart in the stead of his

slain son, and brought me to his own kingdom—in the high hills beyond the hand-fashioned cliff of the Romans.

Here Ossian, the oldest son of Fingal, taught me the lore of the bards and to pluck the cords of the harp in such wise that the heart-strings of my hearers thrilled with their twanging. Here grew I apace, but though I followed the deer with Bran (and never huntsman was hardier or more reckless), never was I bidden to follow the King among the fens, where were the barbarous Picts, or to join him in the forays which he made into the lowlands up to the very wall of the Romans.

"Bide," he would say, "a little longer with white-bosomed Clautho, mourning mother of Fillan, and comfort her for her son that is not; bide in patience, for thy time will come."

It came at length in that year of years, which the Culdees count the two hundred and eleventh from the death of their god Chriosd, when the Roman Emperor,[1] not content with having subdued the Britons in the south country of Albion, sent his marauding legions into the heart of the Highlands of the Gaels. Then was the war-song heard in Morven, and

[1] Septimius Severus.

the horns were blown for the gathering of the clans. Even then, Fingal took me not with him to meet the Romans on the banks of the Carun. But when he returned, heavy with spoil from the defeat of Caracul, son of the Emperor, and I would not join in the feast, but sat apart sullen and silent, he perceived that my heart was hot within me, claiming the hero's birthright to danger,—to the clang of the sharp-pointed spear on the dinted shield, to scars on the breast, and, if needs be, to death.

"Youth of the prideful heart," he cried to me, "here is thy portion from the battle, a Roman poniard whose handle is red with rubies, and whose blade with the red rust of Gaelic blood, for it was drawn from the heart of one of our warriors, where it was sheathed by car-borne Caracul. Take thou the dagger, and wash off the stain in the blood of a Roman."

Then was I glad and I sang a song of the glaive, thirsty for blood as the white fangs of a starving wolf. When I had ended and the warriors had clashed their shields in noisy approval, Fingal swore that mine should be the next enterprise that called for a chieftain of Morven, be the adventure what it might. As he spake, the warden's bell clanged and there

was ushered in an aged man whose ell-long beard lay upon his breast like drifted snow. His habit was all of white, on his head was a chaplet of oak-leaves; he wore also the golden armlet of his order, and his eyes burned deep in their sockets like fires in far caverns. It was the Arch-Druid, Duach, who lived in mystery, hiding, none knew where, since the Romans drave his people from Innis-nan-Dhruid, that is now Iona, whom Fingal greeted as though he were a bidden guest, and not till he had feasted did the King demand his errand.

"Son of the sword," said Duach, "thou hast fought well in Erin and in Alba; but the times are not yet for peace, while the eagles of the Romans glut themselves with the tribute of Albion. I have heard a voice in the south as of the muttering of a gathering storm; it is the voice of ghosts and of their queen Boadicea calling to her people to drive the invader from her land."

Fingal laughed. "Surely," he said, "the voice you heard is none other than the voice of the dead, as the wind rustling the stalks in a field of corn. Not for the wind will the corn budge from its place and throw itself upon the enemy. The Britons have ac-

cepted joyfully their slavery. Caerleon on Usk, Caerleon, the ancient, they name now the City of the Legions. There have the Romans built baths (teaching the degenerate Britons to wash away their courage in steaming waters), and luxury-pandering theatres, and fields for sports. Speak not to me of the muttering of storms of the south land. I tell you that your ancient ears deceive you—'t is but the idle chirping of the crickets in the dry grass."

The withered cheek of the Druid flushed. "In secret, O Fingal, many of the Britons chafe under the rule of the stranger and wait impatiently for the signal which shall bid them rally to the standard of the Princess Morna, last of the line of Boadicea. The chiefs have met, and have sworn that as the maid is now of marriageable age, she shall wed a man, who, when the time is ripe, shall lead a revolt in which they will throw off the yoke of the Romans, and whom they will crown King. For them I consulted the auguries; the birds flew north, the wind guided the fingers of the whispering trees till they pointed northward; and when I wiped the blood of the sacrifice from my hand upon the grass, its juices staining my fingers still further, I drew

them twice across my robe and there appeared a tartan, white, plaided with red and green. Then was I ware by those tints that he who should wed our princess was destined to found a united kingdom—white for Albion, red for the Highlands of the Gael, and green for Erin. So expounded I that symbol, and the chiefs cried with one voice, "Fingal hath conquered Ireland and rules the north-land. A son of Fingal shall be our King, and King also of all Britain. So shall its people be bound together and utterly exterminate the Romans."

The eye of Fingal kindled as he listened to these words, and he looked upon his sons with pride, but Ossian and Ryno were wedded and Fergus loved in secret, and refused the proffered alliance. Then Fingal turned to me. "There remains," said he, "no son of my body, but thou, Ferad Artho, art son of my heart, and to thee, if descendants of mine should fail, would the sovereignty of Alba fall, since thou, the son of my cousin Cormac, art next of kin. To thee also belongs by inheritance the kingship of Erin, therefore in thee are all conditions fulfilled, and the adventure, by the oath I sware as Duach entered hall, is thine also. Follow the Druid, and when thou

hast won thy queen, if so be there is fighting to be done to win thy crown, I and my sons will fight for thee, in Albion even as we fought in Erin."

Then spake I for myself. "I will go with thee, O Druid, to the Princess, but not as one whom she must perforce accept as her husband will I approach the maid. Not so doth love blossom between man and woman, and not for policy or statecraft should they be wed. If so be that my heart yearns to her and if she, not knowing that I am a prince, but believing me a wandering harper to whom thou givest shelter, will have me for love alone,—then well and good; but if otherwise the matter fall, then hither wifeless and crownless do I return."

Then Duach looked at me kindly but sorrowfully. "I love thee for that word," quoth he, "but it is a hard test for a maid whose heart is a house of pride."

"Where all these years have you kept hidden the Princess?" Fingal asked, "and whither would you lead this son of my adoption, even Ferad Artho Mac Finn?"

"Long have we lived unknown," Duach made answer, "in a grianân [cottage] beneath the ivy-covered walls of the ancient castle of Pendragon, from whose windows the

fox looks forth and whose battlements are sentried by the ravens. But when the mistletoe is white, must I take this prince and her also to the chiefest city of the enemy, even Caerleon upon Usk, for it is there at the first snow-fall that the next council of our chiefs will be held. There and then, if the wooing speeds, shall these twain be crowned King and Queen of Britain."

"So shall it be," said Fingal, and as we passed from Morven, the pipers played an old lilt, "Avibheneas a Shlighe," "the joy of his way," a march to which the Highland bridegrooms are wont to stride forth to fetch home their brides.

I remember also that Bran came bounding after me and that I stoned him back with harsh words, and the last sight I had of the castle showed him looking reproachfully after me at the gate.

I went habited in simple green, with my harp slung upon my shoulder,—though Fingal had mounted us on good Highland ponies that carried us blithely on our way. Somewhiles me seemed that I heard a crashing of boughs in the thicket which bordered the highway, and the first night, as we lay in camp, Duach waked me, saying that

he spied the form of a werwolf skulking in the shadows. I threw firebrands whither he pointed and heard the patter of fleeing feet. Naught saw we of strange fearsomeness thereafter, but as we strode to the birlinn at the Haven of the Foray, a dog, lean and panting, his shaggy coat matted with burrs and briars, his white ruff grey with dust, his paws swollen with deep-bedded thorns, red-eyed, and with tongue lolling for thirst, leapt upon me, barking his heart out for very joy. After that we suffered Bran, and he went with us unhindered till we came to the sweet garth where apple-trees nestled under the high-towering keep of the castle. A fair maid stood in the door of the house, and Bran ran to her, as he had run to me from the grave of Fillan, fawning at her feet. Then the maid stooped over him, crying, "Oh, the glorious creature!" and her arms were round his neck and his shaggy head was pillowed, where mine would fain have been, upon her gentle breast. She loved my dog at sight, and so also,— though I came as a gillie with no marks of wealth or rank,— I believe she loved me. For a blossom-time and a fruit-time I tended the cows and the sheep, and Bran took to himself as mate a gold-and-white-pelted collie, and

contrary to his nature folded the lambs at night, and Morna beat the cream in the cool spring-house or spun at her singing wheel under the orchard trees. And as the autumn mellowed the apples, her cheeks glowed as rosily as theirs when our hands would meet, as we stroked Bran in playful rivalry for his allegiance, and she withdrew not hers when I clasped it under cover of his long hair. I played to her upon my harp also, and sang her the old runes of the lochs, the secret of the unrest that is in the waves; the rune of the white merle which sang the joy of pain and the pain of joy, and the rune of the green trees that yearn toward one another in the time of their blossoming. "Know you the secret speech of the quicken trees?" I asked.

"They need no speech," she answered, "for they understand without it, and so do those who love."

Then as I clasped her to my heart, I chanced to look upward and saw the mistletoe, white as flakes of snow, in the orchard trees, and I knew that my wooing was ended. The mistletoe grew on the gnarled branches of an apple-tree which stretched its lichen-covered arms far out over a pool, called the Dragon's Pen.

"Lift me to that branch," Morna commanded, "for she who gathers the first mistletoe of the season, gathers with it great fortune."

I obeyed, but, "Be careful," I cried, and even as I spoke, the rotten branch brake and my darling fell into the pool. Out of sight she sank like a stone, and I, leaping after her, went down, down, as it seemed to me fathoms deep till I found her and rose with her to the surface. It was Bran after all, who saved us both, attracting Duach to the spot by his frenzied barking, for I was chilled to the bone by the ice-cold water and could not have climbed from the pool, but with his help. Morna, when she had recovered, told of a strange dream or glamour she had had beneath the water. She fancied that her fingers had grasped a jewelled diadem and insisted that she had brought it to the surface with her, though there was naught in her hand but the spray of mistletoe.

Then Duach said gravely: "It is a portent," and he told her the truth, both her own rank and mine, and how we were now for journeying to Caerleon where a great destiny awaited her; and Morna was as one transformed. She ran to a cedarn chest wherein were woman's

finery of silk and golden tissue and jewels, which were her mother's, and when she had robed herself in them the maid of the orchard-dairy had vanished, and she stood a princess. But even in that hour my heart misgave me, and more when I came to Caerleon and saw its magnificence, a Roman city with baths and theatres and fair white temples columned in marble and the great Prætorium with its garrison crowning the hill. Nor could I distinguish Britons from Romans, for all wore the toga and spake Latin, for the youths were instructed at lyceums, and arts and law and courtesy made life more agreeable than I had ever known it. Morna was bewitched and declared openly that Agricola in conquering Britain had conferred a benefit upon its inhabitants, that never under our own rule could we have attained to such civility and happiness.

But Duach reproved and contradicted her, asserting that the Romans twice enslaved the Britons, first by force and again by enervating luxury which sapped their virtue and their valour, and that Geta, the gentle younger son of the Emperor, who governed in the south, had destroyed the souls of men, while the cruel Caracalla, who waged war in Caledonia, had kept valour and patriotism alive.

To all this, Morna replied but by lifting her eyebrows, and even I was shaken between two opinions.

Duach had taken a fair house, and to silence all suspicion we mingled openly with the townspeople, both Britons and Romans, giving out that Duach was a leech and compounder of simples of marvellous efficacy, which was indeed the truth. Many cures he effected and many out-patients he had among the Romans of the city, but on one excuse or another, none would we admit within the house, until the day of evil chance brought to the door the cause of all my sorrows.

It chanced that I was returning with Duach from the Forum when we were caught in a great avalanche of people which streamed forth from the amphitheatre. Some wore blue badges, but the greater part red, and all shouted excitedly, but with such confusion that, though I had been instructed in the Latin tongue, I could make naught of the cries.

Of a sudden, a chariot broken and empty, drawn by black horses, wild-eyed, snorting, and foam-flecked, conducted by grooms in blue livery, who held the steeds by their golden bits, passed us so nearly that I would have

been trampled had not Duach caught me aside.

"I had forgotten," he said, "that this is the day of the sports. It was announced that the two sons of the Emperor would race against each other. That is the chariot of Caracalla, the elder of the princes. He has met with some mischance. Andrasta grant that his evil neck is broken."

"Nay, Duach," said one of the townspeople, who had heard that daring prayer, "no such luck,—'t is but his thigh, and they have borne him to thy house."

"To my house!" the Druid exclaimed, scowling.

"Where else, since thou art our most famous leech, and Galen and the most expert of the Roman surgeons have been summoned to Eboracum to wait upon the Emperor who is sick unto the death?"

Strange and dark were the emotions which warred in the soul of Duach as he hastened to his dwelling. The scarlet chariot of Geta, drawn by white horses with red trappings, stood before the door, for the Prince had himself borne his wounded brother to the house of the physician. The crowd made way, recognising Duach, and the gates flew

open as he rapped upon them with his staff.

We crossed the atrium guided by the cries and curses of Caracalla to an inner room. In the presence of the wounded man every passion save that of the healer left the mind of Duach. Deftly he felt the limb with wizard fingers that saw the bones hidden beneath the flesh and the very marrow hidden within the bones.

"The thigh is not broken," he said, "but removed out of its socket. Morna, take thou the man's head upon thy knees and cover his eyes with thy hands. Prince Geta, do thou and this groom hold each an arm. Ferad Artho, take the leg in thy hands, and when I bid thee, pull with all thy might and spare not."

Unquestioning we obeyed him though Caracalla shrieked with agony, and when our work was done a faintness came over him and he lay as one dead. But when his eyes opened they rested upon the pitying face of the girl whose cool hands stroked the close curling hair and wiped the sweat from his face; and as she gently strove to lay his head upon a pillow, he caught her arm and muttered hoarsely, "Stay."

Her eyes raised to Duach were troubled, but he whispered, "I go to prepare a sleeping draught of mandrake. Suffer him for a moment longer."

So she sat rigid, striving only to unlock his fingers which clutched talon-wise the soft flesh. With the sight of the loathing of her face, Prince Geta sprang to her side, "You hurt the maid," he cried to his brother, "loose her arm if you would have her tendance."

"And who are you, to give me orders?" the other asked. "I will hurt her as it please me, and you also, if you come between me and my pleasure."

His hot face wallowed where it lay, and Morna with a cry thrust it from her upon the pillow, springing to her feet white and trembling.

Then Caracalla, unheedful of his hurt, strove to rise, but fell back limp with pain, cursing impotently, and Duach holding a cup to his lips, he drank and slept.

Meanwhile Geta, bowing low before Morna, prayed her not to hold him guilty for the brutality of his brother and vowed that he would protect her from further violence. Then with a grave manner which ill-befitted the seeming levity of the question, for we

knew not then its import, he asked of Duach, "Have you, good sir, ever carved chessmen?"

Duach was angered. "I carve kings," he cried, "and yon damsel needs not other protection than my own," and so dismissed that gentle Prince with less courtesy than he deserved.

Had Duach known Caracalla for the villain he was, he might have forgotten all sense of honour and have poisoned him as he lay in his power instead of restoring him to the exercise of his deviltries. But this was not our way, and so though Morna saw him no more Duach healed him of his hurt, and as a post arrived requiring the presence of the princes at the bedside of their father, he contrived for him, before he could take the saddle or endure the jolting of a chariot, a swinging litter whereby he was conveyed by bearers to Eboracum.

But the younger son of the Emperor went not for a little space. Each day he came to us and talked with Duach of the conduct of the kingdom and how it was his desire to reconcile the Britons to the rule of the Romans, to teach them the arts of peace, to protect them by the great wall from the incursions of the northern heathen, and to do all for their good

so that in future ages his memory should be loved. Duach, though he looked at him askance, felt his heart yearn to the noble youth and I, though I soon knew him for a rival, felt him a worthy one.

Morna, as I have already said, from the time that she was plunged in the fairy pool, was strangely changed. To my grief she denied that she had ever promised to wed me. All her pleasure seemed to be in the brilliant spectacles and the gay sporting of the wealthy and the giddy. To this society she was welcomed, for though Duach had revealed the secret of her rank only to the trustworthy among the Britons, yet it was not a part of his policy to hide her longer from public view, but rather to provoke curiosity concerning her by flaunting a mystery, like the flair of some lordly game in the noses of the hounds of chase. But to my dismay, I perceived that while I believed she loved me before our betrothal, she did so no longer.

I reproached her not but waited sorrowfully, trusting that in time she would understand the vanity of the things which were now her joy. All unwitting was I that there was another influence more subtle than the love of luxury and pomp, more dangerous than

Caracalla's evil passion, which was drawing the one I loved to the catastrophe of her life. More harmful was it because, as she well knew, it was a thing good in itself, the love of a true man, even Prince Geta, who would have died rather than have wrought her pain. He met her more frequently than we knew, for we were often from home at secret meetings of the rebellious chieftains, which were held for the most part at the castle of Abersychan, not far distant from Caerleon.

Much trouble had we with these hot-headed savages, for they were not of one mind, and jealous and quarrelsome beyond belief.

My heart was on fire for liberty and for union against the foreign invader. Like Galgacus who led the revolt against the Romans when Agricola was governor of Britain I strove by all arguments to rouse them against the plunderers who were exhausting our resources by tributes and levying troops from our bravest to serve in distant lands, or to labour in clearing woods, in building roads and fortifications, to delve in the mines and serve in every form of slavery. With all the eloquence I could muster, I pled with them for the sake of their ancestors, for the wives

they loved, and for the future of their children to throw off the hateful yoke.

My oratory failed not on a certain day of its effect, for the chiefs testified their applause with yells and dissonant clashing of shields.

All acknowledged that the consort of Morna, who was the daughter of Ludd (who gave his name to the chief city of Britain, for Ludd's dun [London] it is called to this day), had the chiefest right to reign. But they were by no means of accord that I should be her consort, many an one desiring that honour for himself. Among these were Manogan, brother-in-law of Mathol, who had usurped my kingdom of Erin, and Nudd and Kaw and Llyr and the great Earl of Cornwall and Caradawc also. Kadgyffro, Clydno, and Erbin each desired the kingship. Grathach and Nerthach, brothers of Duach, were children of hell, and envying Duach's chief-Druidship, they fomented more discord, insisting that Morna's consort should be determined by lot.

But Duach overcame this counsel, claiming Morna's right to make choice of her own husband,—and to this the chieftains finally agreed, despatching me to Caerleon, to fetch

Morna on the morrow to the assembly to declare her favourite and our king. Victory gleamed in the eyes of Duach as he administered to us the oath of allegiance that despite of all personal disappointment we would loyally abide her decision, and so he sent me on my evil quest, and that which was ordained came to pass.

As I neared the house I heard Bran howling dolefully and my heart presaged evil at the sound. The door was locked, and none came at my knocking. "Is she dead?" I asked myself, "are the slaves afraid to open to me?" And then I saw half hidden beneath the sill the handle of the key and knew that the door had been locked from without. With trembling fingers I opened the door and saw Bran chained to his kennel, not freely wandering as when left to guard the house,—and though I rushed through every room, Morna I found not, nor any human being, for after her going the slaves had rifled the house and fled.

At last twisted about Bran's collar and made fast to it with a ribbon wherewith she was wont to fillet her hair, I found a letter which she had written me and I knew the truth.

"Farewell," she wrote, "kind hearts and true. Ferad Artho, my brother, and thou Duach, more than a father, against my will I pain ye both, but when love draws the heart, it is as the current of a mighty river which sweeps away a birdeen that has fallen into it from its nest. It would but have made our parting more grievous to have tarried till your return, and now is the Emperor dying and my husband must go to his father. Therefore forgive, and if that may not be, forget—Your Morna."

With this letter there was another much longer from Prince Geta, in which he told us that he had wedded Morna in all true troth though secretly, and that the ceremonies should be performed with fitting state at Rome; that in the meantime he was taking her to his mother, who should know the truth and who would cherish her for his sake as a daughter among her maidens until the days of mourning were accomplished. Later, he hoped to bring her back with him to Britain to reign as queen both by the might of his power and her own right. Much more he wrote, of how he believed that this marriage had been planned by the fates, since he had loved Morna from their first meeting, nay before. For he

had dreamed a dream while yet in Rome,[1] wherein he voyaged to a far island where he beheld a castle, and entering, two young persons, a maid and a youth, playing at chess.

And he saw also a hoary-headed man, with bracelets of gold upon his arms and a golden torque about his neck, and his hair was bound with a chaplet of oak leaves. This aged man, with a steel file, was carving out chessmen.

But the maiden was no more easy to gaze upon than the sun at its brightest by reason of her beauty. A vest of white silk was upon her with clasps of gold at the breast; and a surcoat of gold tissue upon that, and a frontlet of red gold upon her head, with pearls and imperial stones. She was the fairest sight that man ever beheld and he threw his arms about her neck and his cheek was against her cheek—when behold through the chafing of a dog at its leashing and the neighing of horses, he awoke.

He said also that the love of the dream-maiden pervaded his soul so that as often as he slept he beheld her, but that he found her not until he came into the house of Duach at Caerleon when he knew that Morna was the

[1] Adapted from the *Mabinogion*, "The Emperor's Dream," translated by Lady Charlotte Guest.

maiden whom he loved. He knew Duach also for the hoary-headed man of his dream; but he saw no chessmen, for he was mending his brother's hurt. And so intent was Geta upon the token that he asked, "Have you ever carved chessmen?" when Duach answered mystically, "I carve kings and queens, and these twain shall play the game against thee and shall win."

Alas! the wisdom of Duach was at fault, for I had played the game and lost. Nor could any gainsay the event, for we had sworn loyalty to him whom Morna should choose for her husband—and she had made her choice.

So that great conspiracy came to naught, for Morna had been as a bone thrown to a pack of savage dogs—for which in my absence they had fought among themselves disregarding their oath, all save the great Duke of Cornwall, who had left them fighting, and with a band of men-at-arms had hurried on my heels to Caerleon to seize Morna by force and carry her to his castle of Tintagel; and Grathach and Nerthach, who had slunk away at the same time to betray the conspiracy to Geta. We met all four in Caerleon and laughed each in the face of the other.

Stern and strong was the governor whom Geta had left, who marched with a legion to the castle of Abersychan, and those of the rebellious chiefs who were not already killed, fled or surrendered or perished in the burning of the castle.

Duach was taken and against his will set at liberty, for Geta had left command to do no harm to him or to me, but his spirit was dead within him, and there was no longer any hope of liberty. Nor cared I greatly, for my heart was broken and all ambition quenched within me. I would have died outright, but that I waited for the confirmation of Geta's promise, and for assurance that Morna was happy. But in all the news that came to us month after month from Rome, of how Caracalla and Geta were co-Emperors, ruling jointly, and of their magnificence, of the baths and palaces, the triumphal arch on which were graven their victories, of the wealth and beauty of the wife of Caracalla, and of the intrigues and diversions of the court—with all of this gossip, I say, never a word heard we of the marriage of Geta, or mention in any wise of Morna.

Therefore a great longing and unrest possessed me and I determined to go to Rome to see with mine own eyes if indeed she were

CARACALLA
Museum of the Vatican

happy, and to right her if any had done her wrong. Duach approved my going, bidding me good speed at the gateway of the garth by Pendragon, and so hungry was I for comradeship that when Bran followed me I did not drive him back.

Right was I to go, and bitter need had Morna, as I knew when I landed, for all the port was in consternation at the appalling news received that morning from Rome. That the two Emperors had no true brotherly love for each other was well known, but their mother, Julia Domna, had striven to reconcile them, and had planned a meeting to that end in her own apartments. Geta had come in good faith, but Caracalla had stationed assassins in the anteroom who had fallen upon Geta, stabbing him many times, and Caracalla had himself given the death-blow as his dying brother lay in the arms of his vainly-pleading mother.

The coup had been fiendishly planned, the prætorians suborned and lying announcements circulated that the murder was an act of self-defence. It was followed by the massacre of every known partisan of Geta. Rome was in grief, and panic indescribable,—for none, not even the mourning mother, dared utter word of protest against the tyrant.

II

THE FOLLOWING LOVE

O where in the north, or where in the south, or where in the east or west
Is she who hath the flower white hands and the soft swan's-down breast?
Achrone, arone, arone, arone, I see my winsome lady.
She walks the road that 's wet with tears, with rustling shadows shady,
But if she be west or east she be, or in the north or south,
The following love will find her and win the smiles to her mouth.

FIONA MACLEOD.—*Altered.*

So came I to Rome—a stranger and friendless in that great city. Gold had I, but no influence in any quarter, and though I spake the Latin tongue, it was with so barbarous an accent that one of my fellow-travellers gave me direction to a pædagogium, or school, for pages of the Imperial household, where I might win to a readier speech.

Fortunate it was for me that he did so, for strictly was I questioned as to my destination and my business in Rome, when I landed at the great port built by Trajan at the Tiber's mouth. "I am a poor scholar," I made an-

swer, "Ferad Artho Mac Finn, seeking instruction in the school of the whole world, even Rome." Then the officer gave me license to continue to the city and direction how to find the pædagogium, and I went on, with a sad heart and a confused brain, Bran following, and a gillie bearing my harp and my pack.

Surely, if I had not been in such sore trouble, I would have delighted in the marvellous sights that I was seeing,—temples of marble white as the snows of high mountains, and many columned like the straight stems of forest pines, which shoot into the air row upon row, being too thick set for low branching.

Desolate and lonely was I, with the loneliness of one in a great crowd of jostling strangers, each intent upon his own concerns.

For broad as were the streets, they were filled with a surging noisy multitude, running this way and that in inextricable confusion.

I loitered not in the Forum as I would have done had not one consuming purpose possessed me, but followed the Clivus Victoriæ, which skirts the walls of the palaces, that crown the Palatine Hill. Somewhere within that citadel, I thought Morna was weeping her heart out for the black sorrow of widow-

hood that was on her,—sorrow of such bitterness that it might well dull her sense of the cruel danger lurking near,—and with which my love, limitless as it was, knew not how to cope.

None the less, I strode on to the school in the Domus Gelotiana, which was on the side of the hill, facing the great circus. Trouble had I in finding it, for it was in the rear of a barracks of veterans, and the lower story of the building was used by a club of charioteers, while the pædagogium itself was reached by a narrow passageway at the side. This struck me as not a happy arrangement, for the pupils lingered at the gate reading the announcements of the races there placarded, gazing at the fine horses and betting upon them, and learning more of evil from the talk of the grooms and jockeys, than all the instruction of their tutors could wash from their young minds.

But happy for me was this strange consorting, for though the master of the school for a goodly sum received me as an inmate, yet would he not suffer my dog to enter the door, sending me to the steward of the club to obtain housing for him in its stables; and thus it was that Bran, as I shall presently relate,

brought to my aid an old acquaintance; but first I have somewhat to tell of my own unavailing efforts.

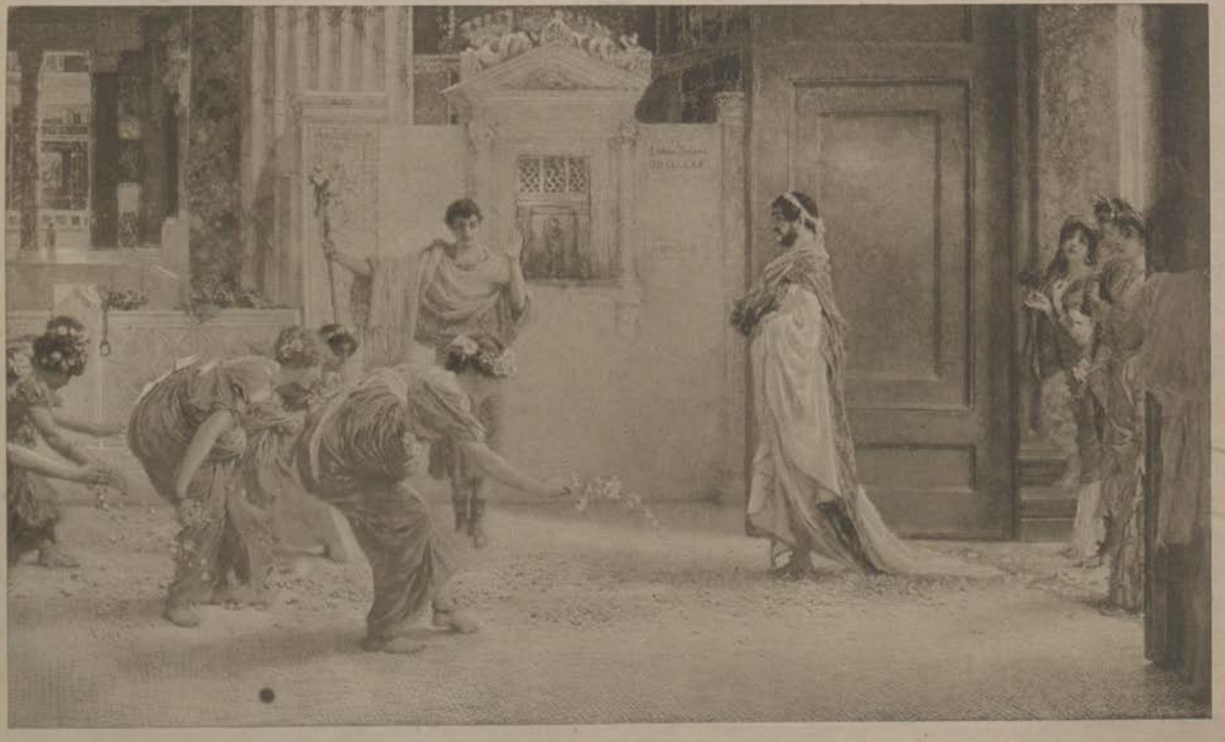
I had stipulated that for the present I should not be obliged to attend classes, as I wished to see the city,—and for three days I sallied from that door at early dawn, walking the streets until late at night, seeking vainly for Morna. Nor was my search utterly aimless, for I strove first of all to obtain audience with the Queen Mother and with the prætor of the city, but was ever denied. Then sought I the officers of the legions which had been in Britain and ever as I asked for any friends of Geta, I was told, "There exist no longer any friends of that unhappy Prince, Caracalla has killed them all. Beware lest thou lay thyself open to suspicion of being of that number."

Of Morna I could learn nothing. None had seen her with Geta or knew of her existence. Some looked at me pityingly when I declared that she was his wife,—for he was supposed to be unwedded. At times a cold fear numbed my heart that she was dead or worse. Once as I looked into the gigantic baths, which Caracalla had just builded, and saw him passing through the main hall, fol-

lowed by his court and welcomed by light dancing maidens, I wondered if Morna could ever become such as these,—and then I smote myself for the thought, for I knew it impossible. Returning that day to the pædagogium, disheartened by my fruitless search and racking my poor brains for some means of winning to my darling, I noticed an ancient and broken stone staircase, climbing the Palatine from the roadway, disappearing between old buildings and anon reappearing again in front of a temple outside the walls of the palaces, but well up the steep acclivity.

Perchance, thought I, this old staircase may lead to some forgotten postern gate whereby I may enter the imperial buildings; and I mounted its dilapidated steps with quick, impatient bounds. Bran caught my eagerness and raced on ahead barking joyfully. But when we reached the temple we found that the stairs ended in a jumble of old ruins and mean hovels. Among these I prowled and climbed until at last my way was stopped by a row of little shops, which backed against a larger house, whose upper story was hardly level with the summit of the hill.

The shops, with the exception of one where wine of a poor quality was sold to the mule-



teers living in this region, were unoccupied, and were open to the view of any chance passer. In none of them was there any communication with the house against which they were built, which in turn jutted from the hill, the massive foundations of one of the palaces rising cliff-like beyond and above it.

A strange house, methought, without an entrance, and I concluded that for some reason it had been abandoned by its inhabitants and what door had formerly existed had been built up by some one of the shops. But even as I thus explained its inaccessibility, there came to my ears the far-away, faint sound of singing, plaintive as the sobbing of a lost child that is too weary to wail loudly, but heart-breakingly sweet as the call of the nightingale to its mate. To my astonishment, the song came from the depths of the mysterious house. Bran heard it and howled in answer until I silenced him, and then the singing had also ceased.

"Who is it will be singing up yonder?" I asked of the shop-keepers, but none knew or cared, and weary to the death and sick at heart I descended the hill. Then it was that as I approached the barracks, Bran dashed

into a group of charioteers, springing upon one of them with wild yelps of joy.

It was Martial, the charioteer of Geta, whom we had known at Caerleon upon Usk. He recognised the dog and me also, and taking me by the arm, he led me aside into the stables, and told me all that he knew of Morna, which was both much and little.

Upon the reading of the will of Severus, it became evident that Geta could not announce his marriage with a foreigner without forfeiting his right to share in the government of the Empire. This, Morna would by no means permit him to do, being content to dwell in retirement, his wife though not his empress. A secret bower he had found for her, that had long before been the simple dower-house of the Empress Livia, and which she would not permit her son to take down when he built his great palace, whose walls cut it off from the Palatine. No approach had it save by underground passages.

In her trouble Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, had taken refuge therein with her children, but since her death it had been lost to memory, forgotten with many another abandoned suite in the now forsaken palace of Tiberius.

Martial himself could not exactly locate this hidden house. He mistakenly believed it to be on the other side of the hill near the palace of Caligula, where was the gate to the Crypto-porticus, a private entrance sometimes used by the Emperors when returning from the city, for he had often left his master here and had occasionally waited at this gate with a chariot not recognisable as Geta's, to take Morna for an airing. Since his master's death, he had attempted to enter and seek for her, but had been prevented by the guards.

He knew not for a certainty that Morna was still in Rome, but he promised to aid me in any way in his power, and I left him with the first ray of hope that had dawned upon me since my arrival in Rome.

Among the pupils of the school were many pages who had the entrée of the palaces, and professing a consuming curiosity to view their glories, I borrowed from one of my comrades his livery, and bribing another to serve me as guide, I wandered through the maze of buildings which crowd the Palatine.

Five great palaces, named from the Emperors who had built them, I traversed, at least in part. The palace of Domitian, most magnificent of all, stood in the centre of the court.

This, my guide told me, was now used for public purposes of display. He showed me the noble tablinum, an audience chamber for foreign ambassadors, with its dazzling throne, and splendid decorations. I entered also the basilica, where the Emperors judged causes brought before them, punishing pitilessly lesser criminals than themselves. But farther I was not permitted to go, though the page pointed to a door at the right of the great peristyle, which he whispered led into an apartment formerly occupied by Geta. Perchance, the thought came to me, from that apartment, there might be some secret passage to Morna's dwelling, and I vowed to myself to find some pretext whereby I might enter and search. At the present time my guide insisted on leading me to the vast palace built by Severus which was the lair of Caracalla. This was full of courtiers and soldiers, the centre of activity of the Palatine and the true court of the Emperor of Rome. But little heart had I to view its treasures; and by main force I dragged my companion back to the northern side of the hill, where were the old palaces of Caligula and Tiberius, asking to be shown the entrance to the Cryptoporticus. The page grumbled, for the palaces on this side of the

THE HOUSE OF GERMANICUS (CALLED ALSO THE HOUSE OF LIVIA)

Palatine had been long deserted by the Emperors.

Slaves were quartered now in the chambers where formerly burned that flame of hell whom the world called Tiberius, and the gloomy subterranean passage was believed to be haunted at night by the wildly fleeing ghost of Caligula, stabbed thirty times by his pursuing assassins.

Many times, the page said, had the ghostly band been seen flitting through the closed doors of the house of Germanicus at the end of the long passage, whence in their lifetime they had escaped.

"The house of Germanicus!" I cried, "know you where it is?"

"Of a certainty," replied the other, "it was a fit lurking place for conspirators,—for it has no windows, being lighted from the roof, and it opens not on any public street but from the Cryptoporticus only, and another subterranean passage which gave exit somewhere on that side of the Palatine facing the circus."

Then I caught my breath. Was this indeed the mysterious house behind the little shops whence I had heard the eerie singing? I smote myself for an idiot, for I knew now the air of the song—that of the white merle,

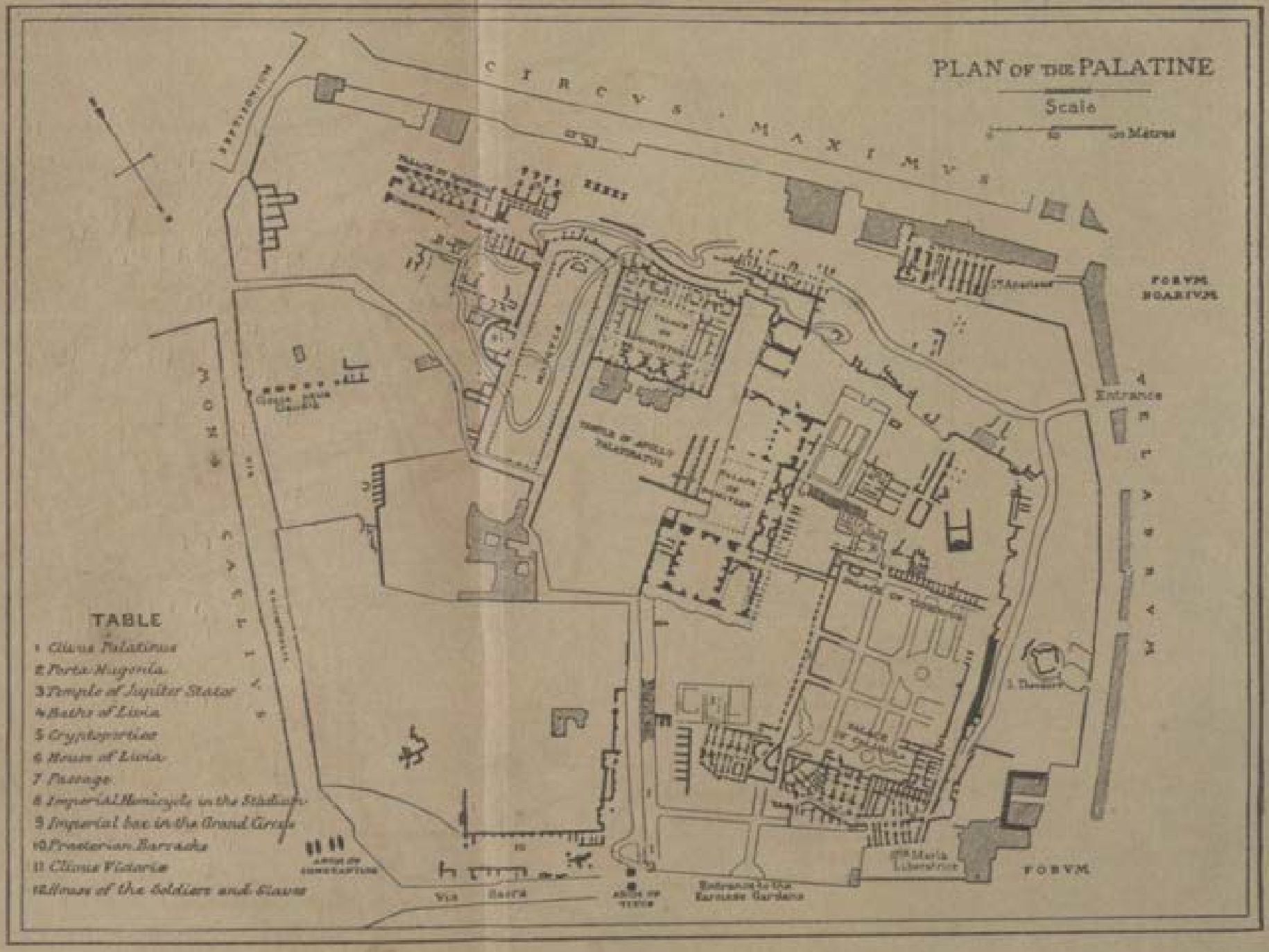
which sang the pain of joy and the joy of pain.

"Lead on," I cried; "it is daylight, we shall see no ghosts, show me the spot where Caligula was murdered!"

So, after much importunity, he led me through the dim corridor which they name the Cryptoporticus, tracing the steps of Caligula to the place where the daggers of Cherea and his fellows found him, and then my over-zealous guide must needs turn aside into the degraded palace of Tiberius to find the hall where they laid the bodies of the Emperor and Empress before the busts of their ancestors, while the prætorians sought for the cowardly Claudius hiding behind the tapestry and set him up as their puppet sovereign.

For all this I cared not one whit, but as it was my pretext for exploring the place, needs must I feign interest until the fellow had emptied himself of his information and my wallet of its small coin. Then, having rid myself of him, I darted down the passage toward the hidden house, and turning an angle to the right ran plump against the spear of a guard.

Lucky was it for me that the soldier presented me with the butt end and not the point of the spear, his object being simply to halt


PLAN OF THE PALATINE
Scale
CIRCVS MAXIMVS
FORVM BOARIVM
Entrance
TABLE
1 Clivus Palatinus
2 Porta Mugonia
3 Temple of Jupiter Stator
4 Baths of Livia
5 Cryptoportico
6 House of Livia
7 Passage
8 Imperial Hemicycle in the Stadium
9 Imperial box in the Grand Circle
10 Praetorian Barracks
11 Clivus Victoriae
12 House of the Soldiers and Slaves
FORVM

me, or I should not have lived to tell this tale. As we glared at one another in the dusk to our mutual surprise, in spite of my page's habit and the unexpectedness of that meeting, the guard knew me and I him. It was a gladiator who had been well known in Caerleon. "It is you, Rufinus," I cried, "the creature of Caracalla."

"And you are that barbarian, the servant of Geta's sweetheart," he replied. "It is to parley with such as you that my master has stationed me here. Faith, I began to think it an idle task, for you are the first of her friends to offer condolence—a waste of time and effort truly on your part, for you will not get in nor the lady out, save on the conditions imposed by my master."

"Caracalla knows then of the presence of Geta's widow in this house?"

"Call her what you will. He knows that she is here—and glad am I that my task as sentry is nearly over, for at noon to-morrow, I shall escort the little savage in whichever of two directions she shall please to choose."

"And what is the choice given her?" I asked.

"The palace or the Tiber: either she will accept the Emperor's invitation to view

the races in the afternoon from the Imperial box, or I must carry her corpse at nightfall, sewn in a sack, to the river."

"And have you any doubt as to which alternative she will choose?"

"None, barbarian, for she is young, and life to the young is sweet, nor does she yet know of Geta's death, for we have cut off from her all communication with the world. Knowing that he would not so abandon her willingly, she imagines him also a prisoner, and I have not only suffered her so to think, but have counselled her to entreat Caracalla to pardon his brother for conspiracy against his life. Though she would not draw the bolts on the inside of this door, yet she listened to my words."

"And what said she in reply?"

"Never a word, but she heard me to the end, for not till I had ceased speaking did I hear her retreating footsteps."

"Rufinus," I pleaded, "she will never go to the palace, but why must she die? Instead of murdering her, save her; suffer her to escape with me now, and you shall be rich. I have much money with me and more shall be sent you from Britain."

"Of what use is money to a dead man?"

DOMUS GELOTIANA; PÆDAGOGIUM IN THE REAR

he asked. "I tell you my life stands the forfeit for disobedience of my orders."

"Then, Rufinus," I besought, "when the time comes that you must bear her to the Tiber, —for she will not take the other road,—tell her that I will be waiting there. Sew her in the sack if you will, but alive, and tell me now from what bridge you will cast your burden into the water that I may be lurking beneath its arches."

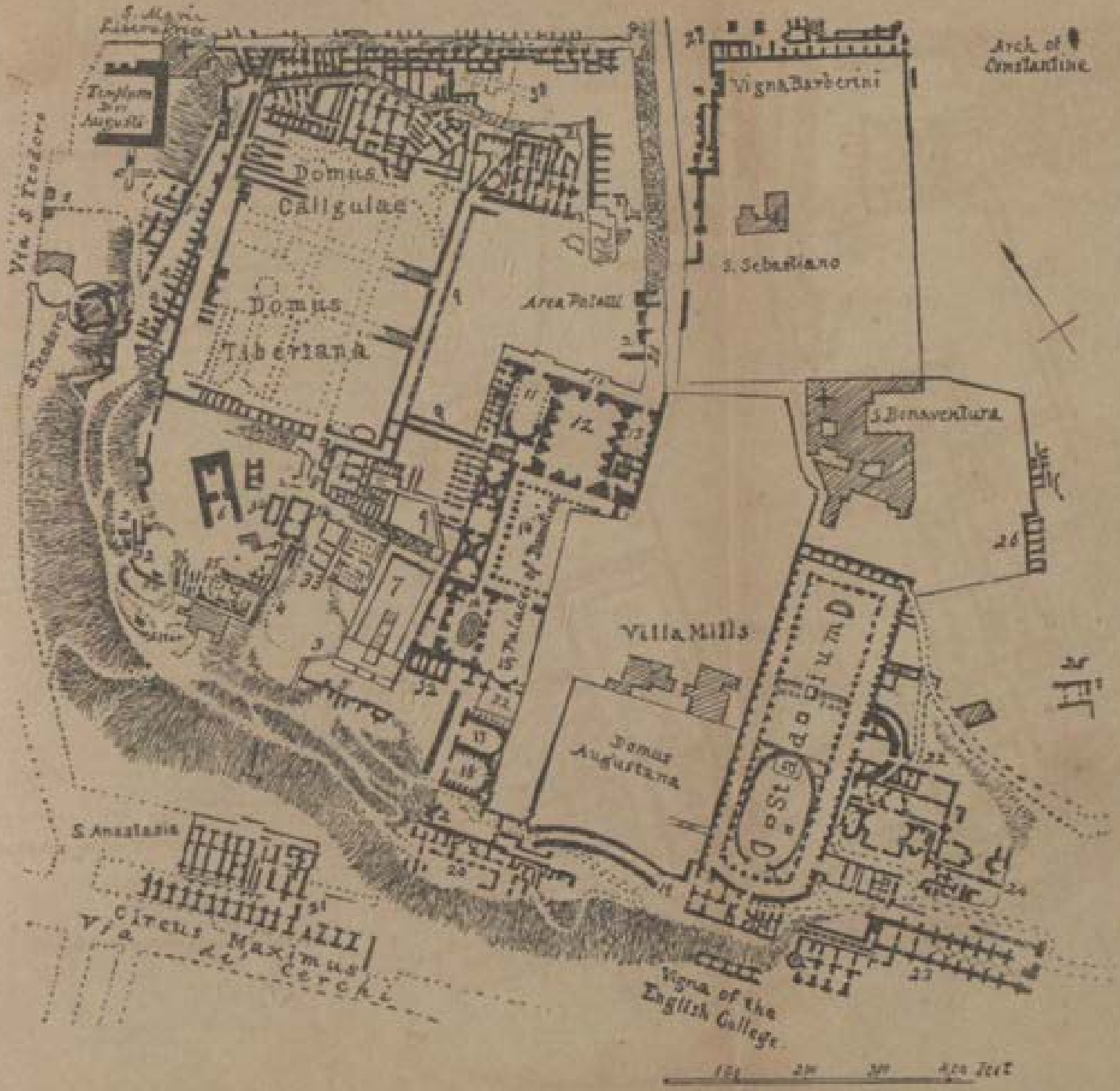
With that he lost patience with me. "Think you," he asked, "that Caracalla will not assure himself that she is dead? I have no quarrel with you, barbarian, but if you stand talking with me longer, you are like to bring me into suspicion. Be off, and prowl not here again, or I shall be forced, mayhap, to kill you."

Well-nigh demented at finding him so wickedly incorruptible, I retraced my steps and wandered down the hill to the city. I could not rid myself of the idea that I should that very night in some way, as yet unthought of, effect Morna's rescue from the hidden house, and I set about planning how to escape from Rome, when once she was outside its doors. This was not so difficult, for at the wharf of the Marmorata I learned from some

sailors of a ship, now lying at the Portus Trajani, which would sail shortly for Britain to bring back metals from the mines. As though Morna were already free I secured the services of a boatman, who promised to be at a certain landing with swift rowers at the morrow's dawning, and to wait beneath the shadow of the wharf for my coming, which should be as soon as possible after sun rising, and thence to take me, my sister, and my dog, to Ostia.

It was a desperate chance, but I was in that mood of exaltation which saw the thing desired accomplished, and returning to the pædagogium, I set about the more difficult part of my task.

The page who had been my guide had told me that the assassins of Caligula had escaped through *the hidden house.* Therefore, I argued, there must be some entrance to it outside the Palatine area, on the slope of the hill, which I had climbed the day before. All this region I searched again, but could find no outlet. Only one means of gaining access to the house was left me. I would come as a thief in the night, and having entered one of the little shops would break through the wall. It was dark before I was able to get tools and begin my task. More difficult was



Plan of the Palatine Hill.

1. Present entrance.
2. Remains of the Wall of Romulus.
3. Small aqueduct.
4. Stairs of Cacus.
5. Hypocaust.
6. Temple of Cybele (so-called).
7. Temple of Jupiter Victor.
8. House of Germanicus.
9. Cryptoporticus.
10. Stylobate of Domitian's palace.
11. Basilica " " "
12. Throne-room of " "
13. Lararium " " "
14. Peristyle " " "
15. Triclinium " " "
16. Nymphaeum " " "
17. Bibliotheca " " "
18. Academia " " "
19. Exedra.
20. Domus Gelotiana.
21. Substructures of ancient buildings and portions of road under the church of S. Anastasia.
22. Palace of Hadrian.
23. Terrace.
24. Palace of Septimius Severus.
25. Arches of aqueduct.
26. Small shops.
27. Remains of Nero's palace.
28. Clivus Palatinus.
29. Via Nova.
30. Farnese Casino.
31. Clivus Victoriae.
32. Ancient tufa masonry under Domitian's palace.
33. Building of Republican date.
34. Very ancient tufa remains.
35. Tufa arches and paved road.
36. Remains of dwelling-houses with baths.

it than I anticipated, for the walls were of concrete harder than stone, and of a thickness incredible. All night long I laboured, Bran keeping watch outside; but when morning dawned I had not cut through the wall. How much farther it extended I could not tell—it sounded as solid to my strokes as when I began; the point of my pick was dulled, my crowbar bent, and my strength exhausted. Moreover, the shop had no screen of walls or doors at the front, but was a mêre cell, its entire interior open and exposed. The keeper of the wine-shop would come soon; and even before his arrival I was in danger of discovery and arrest.

Sick at heart, I left the larger tools on the spot and descended the hill.

Early as was the hour, there was an unusual concourse before the door of the quarters of the charioteers, and I remembered that this was the day of the races in the Circus Maximus. I thought bitterly that the reds would have another patron to-day, and as I entered the stable, to fasten Bran in his kennel, I was more than astonished to meet Martial tricked out in the livery of the blues.

"You!" I exclaimed, "the friend of Geta, wearing the colours of his murderer!"

"Hush!" he whispered, "it was the only way to save my life."

"And had you not sufficient love for your master to die with him?" I asked.

"I have more," he answered. "To die were a stupidity which would serve no purpose. I live to revenge him." He scanned me keenly. "You have been unsuccessful in your quest. Morna also shall be avenged."

"It is not yet time for that," I said, and I told all my effort and my failure.

"Pity it is you found me not last night," he said, "for I could have told you of an entrance to the Palatine enclosure, close to the spot where you so wasted your time and strength. The priest of the temple of Jupiter Victor has a house just within the wall. A tunnel leads from the rear of the temple to his dwelling, which is at the side of the palace of Domitian."

"And this priest?"

"Is dead. He was a friend of Geta's, who spent much time in his company. No one has been appointed in his place,—and the temple is unserved. 'T is thus Caracalla affronts even the father of the gods."

Thoughts whirled like lightning flashes through my poor brain. There must be some

communication between the house of this priest, and Morna's hidden bower. It was through it doubtless that Caligula's murderers had gained their exit to this side of the hill. "Come with me," I pleaded. "Let us force an entrance into that priest's house. There are yet a few hours before Rufinus was to take Morna to Caracalla."

"Nay," he replied, "my time is filled until the moment of the start. The temple is open though empty. You can easily find your way to the gate in the wall. Go, and Fortune aid you."

Back sprang I as directed, and though the gate in the wall was fastened, I brake the lock with a chisel and so mounted an inclined subterranean way which led to the interior of the priest's residence.

It was an unobtrusive house, whose front entrance on the Area Palatina had been locked on the outside, doubtless at the time of the murder of the priest. I explored the deserted rooms and found in the cellar a barred door which on being opened disclosed an underground passage leading, as I had suspected, straight to Morna's home. At last in all this bewildering labyrinth, I had found the right clue,—and would clasp my darling! I could

have shouted for joy, but kept some self-control in my delirium as I ran laughing glad to the wreck of all my hopes.

For, though it lacked two hours to the time that Rufinus had said he should lead her to the Emperor, Morna was not there. The door opening into the Cryptoporticus which he had guarded was ajar and a stranger sentinel was pacing carelessly far down the corridor. Utterly distracted, I rushed through all of the rooms of that dainty habitation. Empty were they, though not void of many evidences of the recent presence of their sweet mistress. There was clothing, richer than any she had worn in Britain. I caught up a scarf, and burying my face in it, sensed a perfume of the violets she loved. There were books and musical instruments and dishes of silver and gold,—and roses growing in great pots in the atrium. For this little house had its garden enclosed, its atrium open to the sky, on which the three principal rooms looked; and the walls of the chambers themselves, though windowless, gave vistas of fair landscapes so cunningly painted that they produced the sense of space and freedom of some Campanian villa.

One of these paintings caught my eye and

held me spellbound in spite of my great trouble. For it was the portrait of Morna herself, depicted as Io—at that crisis when the monster Argus, fixing her with his malignant eyes, crouches to spring upon his victim. Long I stood fascinated by that beautiful face and graceful figure. Why had Geta caused her to be painted thus defenceless at the mercy of a bestial enemy? Methought there was a caricature of his brother in the contorted brows, the cruel jaws of the monster, which must have frighted my poor love, as she knew how utterly she lay in his power. But, if so, the imagery on the wall had its message of hope as well, for it showed the following love, in Hermes drawing near to deliver the maid.

Then as I looked I heard a mighty continuous roar, which might have been the bellow of Argus, but was the shouting of the populace in the circus, which greeted the parade of the chariots before the actual contests which would soon begin.

Where, where was Morna? Had she been carried by force to view the spectacle from the Emperor's box? Had she in terror of death consented? No, she could not be there, and yet I knew not where else to seek her. I

would enter the circus only to make sure that she was not there, and then I would find Rufinus and know the truth.

I elbowed my way among the crowd into that huge enclosure, neither I nor the gatekeeper noticing in the press that Bran slunk in with me. Martial had secured a seat for me on the spina, a long low wall which divided the race course, and as I took my seat in front of the metæ or three great goal posts, I was conscious of crowding Bran against one of them. No one else appeared to see him and with his muzzle upon my shoulder he watched the proceedings with as much interest and far greater decorum than the majority of the spectators. My place was directly opposite the Imperial box, and on it I fixed my eyes, scarce conscious of the events which that concourse of two hundred thousand vociferating human beings cheered so wildly.

Caracalla was late in taking his seat, but he had given the signal for the opening race by dropping a handkerchief from the terrace of his palace, and the earlier and less important contests took place unhonoured by his presence. But the box was not empty: various high dignitaries formed a semicircular screen around his golden chair, and in the

shadowy background there drooped a shrinking figure whose entrance had caused my heart to leap so wildly that for a moment the tiers on tiers of faces that walled the circus whirled in a mad dance about me.

The one motive that could have forced Morna into the presence of the Emperor had been brought to bear upon her. I understood it all from what Rufinus had let fall: how he had told her that conspirators had met at the temple of Jupiter Victor, and that Geta had been tracked to the priest's house on each of these occasions, that while denying that he had been with them, he would not confess where he had spent the hours in which they had plotted against Caracalla's life—that only she could save her husband by proving his innocence and interceding with his brother.

Though too far away to hear her passionate entreaties, I knew the meaning of the drama acted before my eyes, and heard with the ears of the spirit the brutal announcement of Geta's death, as she sank fainting into the arms of Rufinus. Her despair made no impression upon Caracalla. Human agony was to him so common a spectacle that it had lost its piquancy and supporting his chin upon his

palm and his elbow upon his knee, he gave his mind to the sport.

Naught care I for the mad death-dances of the children of the rein, but even though my fortune and my life had been staked upon these races, yet would I not have known what colours gained or lost. I can remember but a fiendish clamour, a confused cataract of chariots and steeds and men, beyond which I saw only a white figure lying death-struck but unpitied at the Emperor's side.

Presently a louder turmoil arose, and through the cloud of yellow dust two quadrigas approached, racing madly neck and neck,—while others followed closely. I knew not the charioteer nearest the spina, but Martial was leaning far out over the Emperor's four coal-black steeds just beyond, and Caracalla's immediate circle were applauding wildly, for he was gaining inch by inch. Morna, who had regained consciousness, was begging Rufinus to take her from the scene, when the Emperor, seizing her by the arm, dragged her to the front, pointing to the horses and shouting explanations in her ear. The moment was crucial, and as the foremost contestant, plying the whip upon his foam-flecked horses, came abreast of the Imperial chair, Caracalla released

his hold upon his victim to gesticulate frenzied directions to Martial.

As he did so, Morna sprang upon the low balustrade and leapt, a white meteor, far out into the circus, falling upon the track directly in front of the madly galloping horses. The charioteer reined them sharply back, but no human power could halt them and, though I dashed forward, I was too far distant to save her. My cry of despair was swallowed in a wail which rose and swelled from every side, when suddenly a grey mass, hurled like a stone from a catapult, shot past me, and lighted upon the shoulder of one of the powerful horses thundering toward the prostrate form. The steed's head was lifted high, its blood-red nostrils expanded, its jaws crunching the bit struggling fiercely against its control, when with a strangely human shriek, the glorious animal rolled with a broken neck in the path of its mates, chariot and charioteer crashing down together and the following four-in-hand falling over it in inextricable confusion.

It was Bran who had killed the horse, as in the hunt he had often felled a stag, and who now dragged Morna unscathed from the hoofs which almost touched her robe. I lifted

the inert form and bore it quickly through an exit under the Emperor's box into the street, the attention of the spectators fortunately diverted by Martial, who swept by winning the race, the crowd which instantly collected about the wrecked chariots adding to the confusion and masking our escape. The nearest asylum was the stable of the club, and I laid Morna upon the hay in one of the stalls. It seemed but a moment later when Martial drove in and shouted to me to bar the gate behind him. I had wrapped Morna in a blanket and I now lifted her into the chariot, and opening the opposite doors, which gave upon the Clivus Victoriæ, we sped toward the landing where the boatman had promised to await me.

But as we approached the Tiber I saw, none too soon, that the bank was guarded by soldiers, for Rufinus had suspected and rendered of none avail my preparations for flight.

Martial wheeled his horses just as the patrol caught sight of us, and with a shout of derision, we dashed on through the Porta Ostiensis, and so took the road for the Port of Trajan, near Ostia,—Bran racing joyfully by our side, and none who witnessed having the power to hinder.

Morna lived indeed, but I could not awaken her to full consciousness. At the next post-house we rested, and changing the quadriga for a more comfortable travelling chariot with fresh horses, we proceeded more leisurely, for we had distanced all pursuit. In the nick of time also we boarded the ship, Martial having scant space to secure in the shops that lined the water-front a bale of such commodities as were necessary for the voyage. To my grief I could not persuade him to accompany us, nor could I think of other farewell token to give him than the jewel-hilted dagger, which Fingal had presented me what time I set out upon my quest, and which until now had never left my side.

I told him its story and how it had once belonged to Caracalla. "He shall have it again," he replied grimly, "for I shall keep it clean until this arm is within striking distance. My opportunity will come, and it will one day find its sheath in the heart of that monster." So saying, he leapt ashore from the moving ship and I saw him no more.

Of the voyage to Britain I remember little. A long night of anxiety it was to me, as it was one of oblivion to Morna. There was a leech among the company who assured me

that her body had received no great injury, but her mind was in eclipse. She lay with her head pillowed on my heart, or on Bran's body, and ever she moved it from side to side, as she raved of the last terrible days, calling for Geta, ever for Geta, until at last the raving sank to moaning and then to silence and wearied out she slept.

Nor did she waken fully when, leaving ship, we made our toilsome journey by wains to the manoir beside the old castle of Pendragon. But here the joy-shout of Duach Dal (blind Duach now) which rang out when he knew of our homing was like a gust of wind opening somewhat the casement of memory in the darkened chamber of her mind, and she looked about with comprehending eyes, recognising both the place and us, and she fell upon Duach's neck, sobbing forth her happiness, and then upon Bran's, and on mine, last of all, saying that I had drawn her from deep waters, had saved her life, and such as it was, it was mine. In the bliss of the moment I did not at first understand that all of the miserable past, from the hour that Bran and I rescued her from the Fairy Well, had vanished like an evil dream. Even the life at Caerleon had left no trace, for the year and

every record of its events were utterly washed from the tablets of her life.

It was the same season as that on which we had left the garth. Again the mistletoe was white in the apple-trees, and the gathered apples gave their juice to the presses. The gold-and-white-pelted collie that was Bran's mate was folding the sheep, and he raced through the orchard to her while she yelped her welcome, knowing him as he came. That night as we sat about the blazing fire, Duach's aged fingers plucked again from the heart-strings of the harp the old runes of the pain of joy and the loves of the quicken trees. Bran laid his great head upon Morna's knees, whining uneasily, for the music stirred his dumb soul with a vague trouble. I think he remembered how he had heard her singing the song of the white merle in the depths of the hidden house, and well knew how he had snatched her from under the hoof-hammers of death. But of all this she remembered not one shred, and once again she loved me as in the days before her evil baptism in the dragon-pool. But I scorned to take advantage of any lapse of memory, and questioned her earnestly concerning what had passed at Caerleon and Rome. It might be

that she had been there she admitted, for she knew that since she fell into the pool and grasped at a diadem, she had been ill and had dreamed strange dreams. "But they can never come true, my Artho," she besought me, "tell me that they can never come again."

"The dreams can never come again," I answered, "nor one of whom you dreamed, but perchance the memory of him and of his love, which was true, may come back to you more clearly at some future time, and you will then reproach me."

"Never," she answered; "never shall the memory of a dream part us." It was early morning and as the twilight reddened into dawn, she lifted her hands to the sun-rising and repeated the prayer taught us by Duach, the Druid: "Praise be to the Light which drives away the darkness and the things of darkness;—even evil and the fear of evil and evil dreams."

And I answered, "A blessing on the Light."

If she has remembered more fully, never has she signified it by word or sign. Often have I held my breath as the Roman legions tramped by on the highway leading to the great wall, while she watched with no quickening of the pulse the light flashing from their

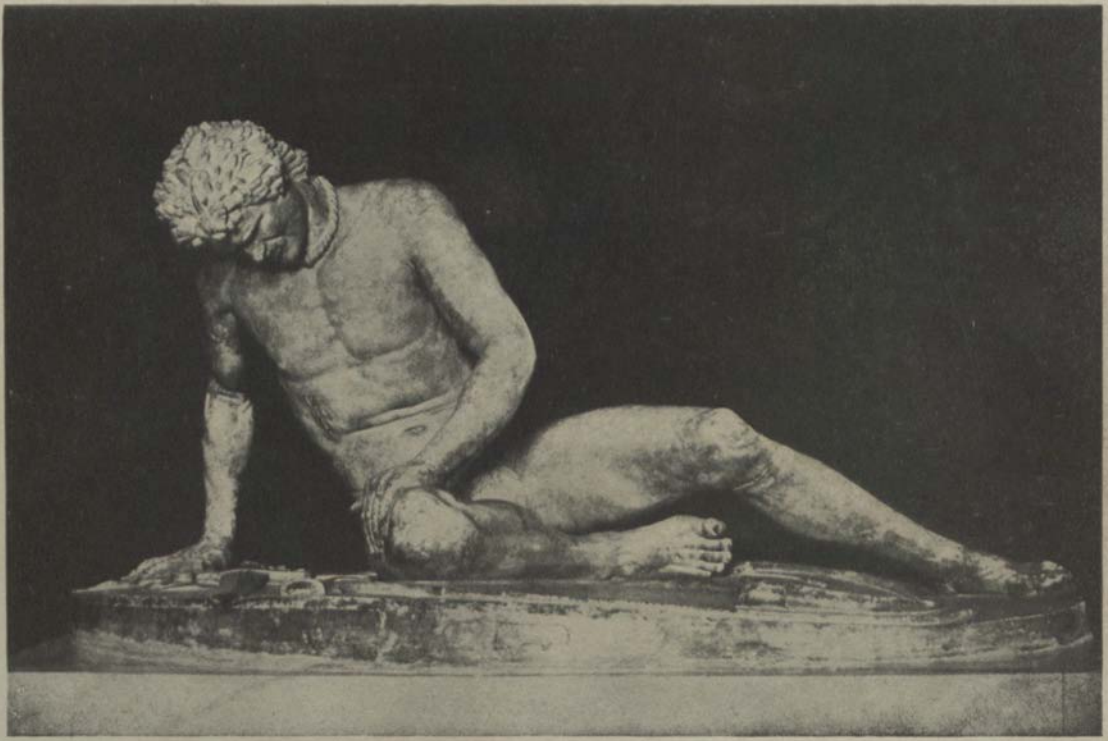
standards and their helmets. They who are fitted to rule shall rule, and what is the ignorant longing for liberty or brute valour to knowledge which is power. We are a nation of savages, nay, not a nation, but many disorganised clans, but the Romans, who are our masters, are our teachers also, and we shall one day learn to profit by their good teaching and reject the evil. Not in the measure of our own lives, mayhap, or in that of the little lad who calls me father and has locks like the flower of the broom and eyes like the flower of the flax, and who places his stone with mine whensoe'er we pass the Cairn of Leck na Con where great-hearted Bran lies buried.

Uther Pendragon we name him, for Ossian, my foster-brother, who came to me at his birthing and told me of the death of Fingal, foretold that a great king should yet arise who should bear the name of Arthur and fulfil the desires of my soul, blasted flower-like by reason of their too early blooming. For him I have written this tale, bidding him learn of every schoolmaster, even of the Culdees who preach the sorrowful religion of Chriosd in the ancient isle of the Druids, for that "the old order changeth, giving place to new."

"Then why, son of Fingal, art thou sad?"

sang Ossian the bard. "Why grows the cloud of thy soul? The chiefs of other times are departed. The sons of future years shall pass away. Another race shall arise. The people are like the waves of the ocean, like the leaves of woody Morven they pass away in the rustling blast, and other leaves lift their green heads on high.

"Gladness rises like beams on a cloudy day. With morning lead Arthur to the echoing hall of kings, but let not the fallen be forgotten, they that were mighty, the stately forms of old."



DYING GAUL
Capitoline Museum

CHAPTER VII

THE NECKLACE OF VESTA

A gold adorned pillared temple round,
Whose goddess wore such rich and precious things,
Worthy to be the ransom of great kings.

PART I

BEING a letter written by Ataulph, King of the Visigoths, relative to the sack of Rome, in the year of our Lord Christ 410, which letter is committed to the custody of Sigesarius, Bishop of Narbonne, to be given, on the death of the aforesaid Ataulph, to the worshipful Lady Galla Placidia, rightful Empress of Rome.

PLACIDIA, BELOVÉD:

I, thy husband, write this letter in the first joyous moon of our wedded life. Please God it be many years before you read it, for I have sworn upon my soul's salvation that, so long

as I live, through no word or act of mine shall the secret which it contains be divulged.

It is the answer to the first question which you asked me after our marriage, the only question of yours which I have ever refused, or ever will refuse, to answer, and I reveal the secret the more willingly now, because there are other matters than that of the necklace woven and tangled with it into the woof of my life, which matters I would fain have you know for the better understanding of my heart and soul.

Think not, most beautiful Placidia, that I read not the question in your eyes, when upon our wedding-day, in my fortress-palace of Narbonne, fifty Gothic pages bearing one hundred golden bowls filled with jewels poured their offerings into the veil which your trembling hands extended to receive them. Right well I noted the eagerness which faded into dismay as the last glittering cascade of emeralds, diamonds, and great balas-rubies rent the filmy meshes.

Ere your lips formed the words, "Where is the necklace of Vesta?" I knew what wedding-gift you missed.

You had a right to ask, for I had promised that (Emperor's daughter and sister though

you were) the dowry which I would give you should befit your royal state and mine, for it would include every gem in my treasury which had been wrung as ransom from the coffers of the temples and palaces of Rome. You yourself had seen the marvellous regalia of Vesta, with its rows on rows of jewels, the votive gifts of a long line of Emperors, which had sparkled for centuries upon the breast of the statue of Rhea, only to be surrendered at last into the hands of the conqueror Alaric, and rightfully counted on receiving it from his inheritor. Nevertheless I mistook not your disappointment for that of vulgar greed. You were troubled only that I, who professed unbounded love for you, should, while admitting that I had bestowed the necklace in safe concealment, refuse to show it to you, or even to tell you where or why I had hidden it.

Suddenly through the doubt and dismay that dimmed your eyes I saw the return of the unbounded confidence of love. "I have guessed, Ataulph, your reason for withholding it," you said. "You fear that it will bring me misfortune such as it brought my cousin Serena. Confess that, though a Christian, you fear the Vestal's curse."

And I, taking you in my arms, answered, "That is not the reason; but trust me, and one day you shall be satisfied."

It is in fulfilment of that promise that I am writing now. The oath wherewith I am bound was made to Alaric as he lay dying, and that you may understand fully why he demanded it, I must make a straightforward and full recital, going back to his first meeting with the Princess Serena, which was also mine with you, on the day when Love had his will with us both.

It was in the citadel of Ravenna, in the seventh year of the war which we Goths of the west bank of the Danube had waged with Rome. We had been the allies of your father, the great Emperor Theodosius, but when he was succeeded in Italy by your brother, the boy Honorius, the mind of our people changed and they declared that they had fought Rome's battles long enough, and henceforth would fight their own. With this intent we chose our leader, Balthus the bold, my nearest kinsman and dearest friend, and raising him upon our shields we proclaimed him Alaric (All King).

For Alaric had had strange visions, and a demon was continually whispering in his ear

that he was to conquer Rome. We entered Italy by the Julian Alps, and overran Lombardy, but everywhere we were met and driven back, beaten or outgeneralled by the commander of the Roman army, the valiant Stilicho. Though forced every autumn to retire beyond the mountains, we were not discouraged, and each spring we descended again with the first avalanches in ever-increasing hordes.

We knew him for a hero while we hated him, this Stilicho, whom the Emperor Theodosius had made the husband of his niece, the Princess Serena, and to whom he had given the guardianship of his two children, Honorius, heir to the Roman Empire, and you, my Placidia, who, if your weakling brother die, may one day be Empress.

And truly no better guardian could have been chosen, and as I have said, for seven years the war was waged, and we won no fixed advantage.

He had beaten us so invariably that he commanded our admiration as well as our fear, —and many of our wisest clamoured to be allowed to return to their old homes.

It was at this crisis that an astonishing turn in the tide of events took place, and Alaric,

whose fiery eloquence had kindled the war, signed at the conference of Ravenna the articles which made the Visigoths once more the allies of Rome. The conception of this stroke of diplomacy was Stilicho's, but it owed its success to the wife of the great general who sat at his side as he unfolded the scheme, and upon whose face the eyes of Alaric were fixed with a fascination that scarce permitted him to comprehend the terms of the treaty.

"And what shall be my guaranty," he asked at last, with a great effort, "that Rome will pay her Gothic auxiliaries for their services?"

"This necklace," replied the Princess Serena, "which is well worth the four thousand pounds of gold which my husband has promised," and rising, she threw back the folds of her peplum and displayed the wondrous necklace of Vesta.

You, who have often beheld that marvellous corsage of precious stones, which so covered the fair form of your cousin that for modesty no other vestment was required, can have little comprehension of the effect upon my astonished gaze of those linked golden breast-shields studded with diamonds, harnessed to gorget and girdle by strings of pearls and priceless

gems, which fell in festoons upon her arms and in long trailing ropes and fringes to the skirt of her robe.

For an instant even Alaric's rapt gaze was withdrawn from the face of the Princess.

"The goldsmiths of Rome were doubtless inspired by your beauty, most radiant Princess," he said, "for never in my life—and I have seen the crown jewels of Byzantium—have I imagined such splendour."

"This necklace was not designed for me or for any Roman lady," Serena explained. "No empress ever possessed its equal. When the beautiful Vestal Tuccia was accused of having violated her oath of chastity, with the confidence of innocence she underwent the ordeal of holding aloft a sieve filled with water from the Tiber. It is said that not a drop fell, for the goddess Rhea proclaimed her purity by a miracle, stopping the holes in the sieve with pearls. These were strung and formed the first adornment of the effigy of the goddess. Since then the jewels deposited through many centuries as votive offerings at the shrine have been added until it has become what you see. When my uncle, the Emperor Theodosius, expelled the pagan priests from their temples, abolishing the an-

cient religion and proclaiming Christ supreme in Rome, in idle curiosity I visited with him the temple of Vesta. None had dared to enter the shrine before us, and an aged priestess, the only one of the Vestal Virgins who had not fled, was feeding the sacred fire. The Emperor extinguished it with his own hand; but the tremendous significance of the act was lost upon me, for I was bewitched by this necklace which I beheld for the first time, upon the shoulders of the statue of Rhea.

"With greedy fingers I withdrew it from the statue, the Emperor approving the act. Then the Vestal crone, who was being dragged away by the guards, cursed me in words so horrible that I have never since been able to rid my memory of the scene. In sleepless nights and in terrifying dreams I see her frightful face and hear again her terrible maledictions. Moreover, I have learned that a band of fifty pagans, all men who will stop at no crime, has been formed calling itself the Order of the Necklace, whose object it is to restore the cult and the necklace of Vesta to their ancient shrine.

"They will gladly pay you the gold which my husband has promised to possess again the regalia which they reverence, whereas it

is useless for me to attempt to keep it. One of this order may be at this moment in this palace watching an opportunity to rob or even to murder me."

But as Serena strove to unclasp the fastenings, Alaric stayed her hand. "Keep the necklace," he said. "Incomparable though it is, you alone are worthy to wear it. Let it be known to all men that I and my Goths form henceforth your guards, sworn to return it to you, should it be taken from you, and to visit swift retribution on whomsoever would harm you, though to lay hands upon them we must batter down the gates of Rome itself."

So that allegiance which had seemed impossible was quickly arranged. We Visigoths were to settle in Gallia Narbonensis, that part of Gaul extending from the Pyrenees to the Loire, conquered by Cæsar and again by Messala, and possessing rich cities built by the Romans, and these we were to fortify as bulwarks for Italy against the Huns and the Franks.

Alaric knew from the first that his love was hopeless. Indeed I think he could not have loved the Princess Serena as he did, had he not known her devoted to her husband. But none the less, he was her slave, content to serve without guerdon.

With me it was far otherwise. From the time that Stilicho presented me to you, after the conference in the great hall of the fortress, —though it was with the hateful words, "This is the promised wife of my son,"—a wild determination sprang up in my heart to make that promise of none effect, and at what cost soever to win you for myself.

You were but a slip of a girl of twelve summers, and the boy Eucherius, to whom you were betrothed was younger than yourself and backward for his years. But child that you were, you gave promise of the beauty which is your heritage, and your eyes were even then such as they are now, irresistible in their appeal.

Do you remember, Placidia, that your first word to me was also an appeal?

Alaric had explained that my name, Ataulph, signified "sworn helper," and that I had indeed proved myself such to him. While he spoke, your eyes burned themselves into my soul, and as though satisfied with what you saw, you asked, "Will you be my helper also?"

Bowing gravely, I kissed your hand and answered, "Yea, unto death."

"Then come with me," you replied archly,

"to the ramparts, and lift me so that I can see over them. I have always longed to do so, but I am not tall enough"; and you flitted away before me, Stilicho smiling indulgently at your whim.

But when we reached the place your mood had changed, and you faced me with the dignity of a woman. "That was but a ruse to have speech with you, Ataulph," you said, "for something tells me that I can trust you. I would indeed be lifted above and beyond these prisoning ramparts, but he that would do that must be as much my friend as Alaric has promised to be that of my cousin. Are you Goths all so chivalric to women?"

When I asked how I could serve you, you told me that you loathed Eucherius, and begged me (for you had been told that I was on the way to Rome) to influence your brother, the young Emperor Honorius, to prevent the marriage.

Then madness seized me—or was it inspiration? I told you that I would make myself a Roman for your sake, and that I would do such deeds for your country as should warrant me one day in asking for your hand.

You nestled closer. "Take me with you

now," you whispered, "else it may be too late."

Sore tempted was I to obey your behest, but reason restrained me.

"You are but a child as yet," I said; "there is time for well-considered action. I am a Christian like yourself, and I have sworn to maintain good faith with Stilicho. To carry you away would be to break this new-made treaty and spoil all. Therefore wait for me with constancy, for I will surely come again to claim you."

With that we kissed and parted; but, though I saw you no more for many a day, I regarded you as my affianced bride, and loved you with an ever-increasing love which even death itself will not quench.

But when the league which Stilicho had made was submitted to the Senate, the words "tribute-money to the Goths" so roused the old Roman spirit that Stilicho was doomed.

I do not blame your imperial brother, my Placidia. He was but the figure-head upon the vessel of the state, powerless to move except as it moved, and he was forced to sign the death-warrant of the bravest and most loyal friend that Rome ever possessed.

The travel-worn messenger who had ridden

night and day to Narbonne with the news had been sent by the Princess Serena with this letter to Alaric:

"My Friend:

"I am a prisoner in my villa upon the Pincian Hill. The necklace of Vesta has been restored to the pagans, but not content with that, they demand the life of

"The Widow of Stilicho."

When Alaric read these words he called us to leave off building the towers of Narbonne and Carcassonne, and his own mountain castle between those cities, and at the head of his army he marched upon Rome. His soldiers were fired with indignation on account of the non-payment of the money promised by Stilicho, but I knew that another passion burned in the heart of Alaric. The Princess Serena now a widow, might be won. She was in trouble, possibly in danger, and this was enough to bring him to her aid, and he forthwith laid siege to the city.

The danger was greater than he knew and was only increased by our coming; for the aged priestess of Vesta, who had cursed Serena, had reappeared in Rome. Unrecognised by

the Princess, she entered her service and constituted herself a spy upon her actions, reporting to the Senate that Serena maintained a correspondence with Alaric and was planning to admit the Goths. There was semblance of truth in the calumny, for Serena's villa was in the ancient gardens of Lucullus. The aqueduct of the Aqua Virgo pierced the hill beneath it and was connected by a staircase with the villa of the Princess. An army might readily enter if the gate which opened upon the Campagna were unbarred and, threading the tunnel single file, could pass beneath the walls of Rome into the heart of the city. The crone made it her business to tempt the unfortunate lady to the very acts with which she was charged, and herself carried letters between the Princess and Alaric—issuing from and entering the villa by the Aqua Virgo.

The gate was guarded without by a detachment of Roman veterans, but the Vestal had the countersign and the captain had orders to allow Alaric, and even a small body of men, to enter if the Vestal accompanied them, for it was the design of the Senate thus to trap the leader of the Goths.

The plot was well planned and was partially successful. Serena's desire was not to admit

the Goths, but to escape to Alaric. This, the traitress convinced her would not be possible until she had planned a rendezvous inside the walls.

Serena's letter, requesting that a detachment of Goths should be stationed where they could watch the gate on a certain night, and have with them a horse, on which to carry her away, was changed by the Vestal into an appeal for Alaric to visit her within the villa, there to arrange for the admission of his army.

Alaric took me into his confidence, and I begged that he would not jeopardise his person by entering the city, but would suffer me to go in his stead, and though he answered, "Be assured that Alaric will not suffer his friend to go where he himself dares not venture," yet my caution had its weight, for he sent the spy back with a letter to Serena entreating her and you, Placidia, to join us outside the gate on the next night, that we might know you were safe in our camp before assaulting the city.

When the Senate read that letter, they knew that their hope of trapping Alaric was foiled, and they had no intention of allowing Serena to escape; but they bade the Vestal display

the torch which was to be the signal that she agreed to his plan.

Our scouts had made a careful reconnoissance of the vicinity. It appeared to be neglected, and Alaric ordered a demonstration of activity to be made in another quarter, in order that attention should be withdrawn from this portion of the wall. The night was moonless, the sky overcast by scudding clouds. Under cover of the obscurity our detachment of fifteen picked men rode to a lonely farmhouse, the nearest building to the aqueduct. Here we left our horses, and crept up a ravine toward the water-gate.

High on the very edge of the wall stood the villa, and the signal light in the cresset assured us that the two women whom we loved were awaiting our coming, for the Vestal, rightly comprehending my eager questioning, had lied, saying that you were with your cousin and had charged her with many verbal messages of affection. Therefore, believing too readily what we most longed for, Alaric and I approached the gate, a little in advance of the men who crept upon all-fours behind us. We had expected to find it ajar, but it was closed, and as I fumbled for the latch, my hands were slimy with moisture and drops fell

upon my forehead. Just then the stars shone out and Alaric uttered a hoarse cry. I glanced upward and there, nailed by the hair upon the gate, was a ghastly object—the severed head of the Princess Serena!

With a cry Alaric pushed me aside and detached it from its fastenings, and with it a bloody parchment on which was written, "Thus the traitress Serena keeps her rendezvous with the King of the Goths; but the Princess Placidia grants none to an enemy of Rome."

While Alaric stood encumbered with this horrible burden, and I read the words to him, the gate was thrust violently open and armed men sprang upon us. Our swords were out and, our brave followers at our side, we fought our way back to the villa where we had left our horses, and so, with many wounds, escaped with half of our men to our camp.

But all the way Alaric bore the head which living he had so worshipped, close folded to his heart, and laid it at last upon his pillow, wet with blood from his own wounded arm.

Then we knew, from the distorted features and by the prints of sharply faceted gems in the soft flesh, that the Princess had been strangled by the *Necklace of Vesta itself,* and

the head afterwards severed so close to the body that we might see these scars upon her throat and have no doubt as to the manner of her death.

We gave the head Christian burial in an old subterranean church, among the relics of holy men and women martyred like her by Roman beasts. In the tumult of wild emotions which tore my heart, it was not pity for the fate of the Princess which moved me most, or the stony grief of my kinsman, or even my own bitter disappointment, but the rumour brought us by a deserter, that you whom I worshipped as my ideal of all things holy had appeared before the Senate, urging them to condemn your cousin to this cruel death.

In my soul I believed you innocent of this crime, but when I bethought me of Serena's fixed ambition that you should become the wife of her son Eucherius, I was sick with doubt.

But, even when my judgment reeled before the accusation which I could not disprove, I knew that, innocent or guilty, I should love you until my death. All in vain I argued with Alaric in your behalf. His reply was that there was nothing which a woman would not do for greed of precious stones,—that both

he and you knew that Serena had bequeathed the necklace of Vesta to you upon her death, and that you had undoubtedly concocted this plot in order to secure it.

"And by God's death," he swore, "she shall have the necklace, and in the same fashion that the Princess Serena last wore it; for if ever she and it come into my power, these hands shall clasp it about her guilty throat."

Ever thereafter I fought in agony of mind, knowing that each victory of ours brought Alaric nearer to his revenge,—until at last in fear of starvation the Senate agreed to all of Alaric's demands save two:—for they could not give him the necklace, the pagans having hidden it, and they had the manhood not to deliver up the sister of their Emperor to his will.

I think that Alaric honoured them the more for their refusal, though he replied simply:

"If Rome wishes more fighting, Rome shall have it."

But ere it came to that, I was to endure the sternest ordeal of my life, for the deputation thus sent back returned again at nightfall to negotiate further. I had command of the outpost nearest the gate from which it issued, and I watched the little group under a flag

of truce file down the steep hill, cross the Salarnian bridge, and slowly climb the incline. They were on foot, though all were patricians except two slaves, who bore between them a litter.

The beating of my heart told me whom they brought ere I assisted you to descend, and bidding the others wait in the guard room below, I led you up the rude staircase to the upper story of the tower which served me as post of observation and habitation.

There with a sob of joy you threw yourself upon my neck, and the rapture of that moment as I held you close, heard you speak, and knew you innocent and true in all that tangle of intrigue and crime, all but bereft me of my senses.

You had sent me no message by the traitress Vestal, nor had you any part in the foul murder of your cousin, nor had you known of the refusal of the Senate to Alaric's demand for your presence in our camp until the return of the parleyers, when, taking advantage of the dismay occasioned by his ultimatum, you had compelled them to bring you to us.

"I had no fear," you added, "for I trusted in your influence, Ataulph, to induce

Alaric to abandon the siege. And I have brought my brother's written promise that Rome shall be ransacked, and if necessary, the leading pagan patricians tortured, until the necklace of Vesta is discovered and sent to him."

At that final word I came to myself and remembered your danger. "God forbid," I cried, "that the accursed thing or that you, my Placidia, should ever come under the power of Alaric. You must go back to Rome,—and the King of the Goths, who is at the headquarters of the army, shall never know that you have ever been within our lines."

"And you refuse to receive me, now that I have risked all to come to you?" you cried, your eyes wide with wonder and indignation.

"I can only tell you," I replied, "that you are in deadly danger here,—peril from which I am powerless to protect you."

I saw by the scorn in your face that you did not believe me. "I dispense with your protection," you said, "and I rely upon that of Alaric alone, whom my cousin Serena believed to be the most chivalrous of men."

As you spoke we heard his resolute tramp upon the stair, and the man to whom you appealed stood before us. He looked for a space

from one to the other of us, holding his chin musingly in his hand.

"This is the Princess Placidia?" he asked at length.

"And my affianced wife," I replied, striving to draw you to my side, but you repulsed me violently, crying, "That I am not, nor will ever be. I am your voluntary hostage, my Lord Alaric, and come as pledge that all your demands will be met by Rome."

"They told me so, below stairs," he replied, regarding you curiously. "All the same I thought, mistakenly perchance, that the weal of Rome might not have been the only motive which brought you hither. I have given my word to the parleyers that you shall be honourably entertained, and I came to ask you, Ataulph, to act as this lady's guardian while she is in our custody."

Defiance flamed in your eyes and tossing your little head high, you replied: "Trust him not, he has just endeavoured to persuade me to return to Rome."

"I cannot believe," he answered, "that Ataulph would so thwart my will."

"It is nevertheless true," I retorted, "and you can understand why I did so."

"I understand," he said, looking at me

fixedly, "Ataulph deemed you not safe with me. He doubtless told you of an oath I swore in the bitterness of my soul. Oaths are not light things, and I am accustomed to keep mine."

"Your oath?" you replied in bewilderment, "Ataulph told me nothing of any oath of yours."

"It is well," he said, "well for your peace of mind and good opinion of me; and Ataulph, if you have any hope that I may not fulfil it, then never let mortal know what I have sworn. But Princess," he added, turning to you, and addressing you with a strange smile, "I counsel you be courteous to Ataulph, for you may one day wish that you had accepted his connivance at your escape. He shall escort you to my citadel of Narbonne, where you shall be my guest, while your countrymen are collecting the tribute I have asked. Be not afraid of Ataulph, his honour is as immeasurable as is his love. Nor need you fear me if you are innocent," and Alaric took your face in his hands and looked again into your clear eyes. "If you are as good as you seem, call upon God to vindicate you, by never suffering the necklace of Vesta to fall into my hands, and so may the Judge of all keep me

from a great crime and bring the guilty to punishment."

You had no conception of what he meant, or of the love and torturing fear which fought within my heart. You thought that I had ceased to love you and had striven to disembarrass myself of you, and you hated me as only a humiliated woman can hate. I was your guard riding at your side during the long day-marches, and a faithful sentry pacing before your tent at night. Rarely I slept, and when I did so, it was at your threshold, my hand upon my sword.

You misunderstood every attention and rejected every overture of kindness, flinging upon me the taunt that when your brother, who was at Ravenna, should hear of what had happened he would send his valiant general Constantius with a legion, to rescue you.

In my heart I had decided that if such onslaught were made, I would allow you to be captured and carried away from me for ever, rather than submit you to the fatal chance of the surrender of the necklace, which the fanatical Alaric would regard as God's bidding to execute upon you his sworn retribution.

But our northern journey was accomplished in safety. There was no attempt to snatch

you from us, and though I left you opportunities to escape you were too honourable to avail yourself of them.

When we clattered over the drawbridge and entered tower-girdled Narbonne you had more the air of a conqueror than I. The sight of the rampart of the Pyrenees, the first high mountains that had met your gaze, filled you with exultation and you drew in the pure air with delight.

"This is glorious, glorious!" you cried, and as I lifted you from your saddle your hand rested upon my shoulder with something like a caress, and as the days went by, I saw that you were changing, and were not pining prisoner-like for the southland. I thought that this was because you had not found the Goths and the Gauls the barbarians which you had thought them. For all through southern Gaul in the cities of Marseilles and Nîmes and Arles, and even in our mountain fastnesses, Roman arms had maintained Roman law and that in turn had paved the way for Roman civilisation which, engrafted on a sturdier stock, had not corrupted morals or weakened the mind or hardened the heart, but prepared all for the religion of Christ. And indeed, the revulsion

of feeling which followed when you comprehended this was doubtless a mighty factor in the transformation wrought before my eyes. The wild and beautiful region also captivated you. You sang at times, you walked with a buoyant step. I loved you more and more, but I understood you less and less, for to me you were still so wilful and ungracious that I could not guess that under your sheath of indifference you took note of and yearned for my love.

The year came to its end too quickly. Not one of the engagements which the Romans had made had been kept. The Gothic soldiers clamoured for their pay and again Alaric besieged Rome.

Your parting word to Alaric as we took leave of you was, "I hope they will not give you all you demand, so that you may still have an excuse to keep me here, for I look on you not as a captor, but as a kind guardian."

"Is it so?" he asked. "Then I, too, trust that they will not give quite all that I have demanded."

But to me you had no such farewell.

It were too long to recapitulate that campaign in all its details. Alaric's magnanimity was matched continually by treachery and faith-

lessness and the inevitable day came at last in midsummer of the year four hundred and ten when we Goths, an hundred thousand strong, without waiting to lay formal siege, battered down the Salarnian Gate and, sweeping away all resistance, entered Rome.

Never was the sack of a city conducted with such restraint. Only the villa where Serena had met her death and the neighbouring palace of Sallust were burned. All Christians, and even pagans, who took refuge in Christian churches were spared, and though we seized the treasures of the idolators not a golden chalice or embroidered vestment belonging to holy church was taken.

The trembling Senate hastened to bring to Alaric every ounce of gold which had been promised and much more, so that every Gothic soldier was enriched. Alaric made stern inquisition into the death of the Princess Serena, and was told by the Senators how cunningly the aged Vestal had planned and executed her plot, so that they believed that Serena had written the letter forged to imitate her hand, which offered to admit our army. They falsely declared also that you had sent this letter to them.

But the Senators insisted that they had not

condemned the Princess to death, but that her murder had been committed by the secret organisation, the Order of the Necklace of which Serena had told us, and that they alone knew its hiding-place.

Alaric demanded that these men should be surrendered to him as captives, and when this was done ordered that they should accompany the army in chains. He made no requisition for the necklace itself; one would have thought he had forgotten it, though I knew that this was not the case. He was in sore trouble of mind in regard to his duty toward you, Placidia, but he trusted that God would vindicate and protect you by keeping from him the necklace, the surrender of which he had constituted an attestation of your crime.

But as we were leaving the city the Roman general Constantius stayed us in front of the temple of Vesta, and two lictors bore from the shrine a carven chest. Raising the lid, Constantius displayed the fateful object, calling upon all present to bear witness that every extortion of the conqueror had been paid, and that his personal honour, as well as the law of nations, now demanded the return of the hostage, the Princess Placidia.

Alaric turned deadly pale. "I keep my

oaths," he muttered, and in a voice that froze my blood he swore, "May God strike me dead within this year if I bring her not back to you adorned with that devil's bait."

So we evacuated Rome, but not to return to Aquitania, for Alaric had determined to put off the evil day by first subduing all the peninsula of Italy and Sicily and thence attempting the conquest of Africa. We had first to build ships, and when built a great storm sunk or disabled the greater part of the fleet, and while we waited in Calabria, fever struck down our leader, and Alaric, unconquerable by man, lay dying by the hand of God.

"Undo my gorget," he gasped, as I bent over him, "for this weight upon my chest is crushing me to death." As I removed his shirt of mail, I saw to my astonishment that he wore the necklace beneath it.

"Nay, take it not away," he babbled in delirium, "for I have seen the Princess Serena, who longs for it in Heaven, and who claims the fulfilment of my promise to restore it to her. That promise takes precedence of the oath I swore at her death. Neither Placidia nor any one else shall possess it but only you, my love, Serena. I did not think that I could restore it to you, but I am bringing it. No

hands but yours shall take it from my neck. From my bosom to yours—Death separated, and Death shall join."

Then he turned his dying eyes upon me, and I promised that none should remove the necklace nor the secret of its hiding-place be told —so long as I should live.

We loved our chieftain, and that none should violate his tomb we caused the Roman captives to turn the river Busento from its course, where it leaps from the Apennines ere it encircles the town of Cosenza. There, in its bed, they fashioned a tomb and thither I led the war-house of my brother, two of his comrades walking on either side, and supporting the dead Alaric as he rode to his sepulchre.

At the blow from my battle-axe on the white star upon his forehead the noble charger sank to his knees, and we closed the door upon our leader still sitting upright in his saddle. Then they opened the sluice-gates and the river rolled again in its wonted channel.

When these rites were accomplished the Goths elected me their king and, according to their ancient custom, the noblest of the warriors raised me upon their shields, so presenting me to the army.

Their first act after swearing allegiance was one of disobedience to my express commands, for when I pardoned the miserable captives, the chiefs howled aloud that these men had been already condemned to death by Alaric for the murder of Serena, and, even if this were not so, their death was necessary in order that the place of his burial should remain for ever unknown to the Romans.

Therefore without delay they massacred the wretches and cast their bodies into the river, where they still keep in death the oath which they had made to guard the necklace of Vesta.

This conduct of my turbulent and savage adherents gave me food for serious reflection; for though I had been eager to extinguish the name of the Roman Empire so that what had been Roman should be Gothic and Ataulph should be what Cæsar Augustus had been,—yet this experience made me realise that the Goths, in their unbridled barbarism, were unfit to govern themselves or to obey laws unless forced by a sovereign power—and, seeing that no state stood for the majesty of law like to the Roman, I determined to efface my own ambition and give myself the glory of establishing the Roman Empire upon sure founda-

tions. Therefore I gave the order for the evacuation of Italy, and the army of the Visigoths in the flush of its success took up its peaceful return march to Gallia Narbonensis.

You gave me scant welcome, Placidia, for when I laid my crown at your feet it was but to receive the haughty reply that never as a captive would you wed your captor though he were the conqueror of the world.

When I strove to explain to you the resolve which had formed itself in my mind, you looked at me with blank incredulity and bade me put those wild promises into execution, for not until your imperial brother tendered me your hand, as his ally and the saviour of Rome, would you place it in mine.

Well you knew that the Emperor regarded another man in that light, for Constantius had taken the place of Stilicho, had quelled a revolt in Africa, and was now at our very doors, laying siege to Arles, and ever and always he demanded your return, for you were the lodestar of his ambition even as of mine.

With long patience and unconquerable determination I combated him,—not now upon the field of battle, but in the councils of Rome and in the wavering favour of Honorius.

At length my opportunity came when Sarus,

the hereditary foe of my family, with a motley horde of Tartars, Huns, and Burgundians, swept down to invade Italy. These I stayed upon their way and overthrew, and your brother in his gratitude bestowed upon me the prize for which I had fought, his authorisation of our marriage. Even then I was not content, for I knew not that I had won your love until I saw you standing between the two towers of the gate of Narbonne, extending a laurel crown and hailing me Friend and Defender of Rome.

I counted that the greatest victory which I had ever won, and I am content, for I know now that you have loved me even as I have loved you,—and that no misunderstanding can ever again separate us. Your love wavered not when from the wedding gifts which I lavished upon you you missed the resplendent necklace so fiercely fought for and so unwillingly yielded as a part of the ransom of Rome. When your eyes read these lines, you will not grudge its present resting-place, or blame me for the one secret which I shared not with you, for I shall have gone to Alaric, having kept my word, and, in despite of that, shall, I trust, have proved how utterly, how immeasurably I love you.

PART II

HONORIA AND ILDICO

An Afterword

By Cosenza, songs of wail at midnight wake
Busento's shore,
O'er the wave resounds the answer, and amid the
vortex' roar!

Valiant Goths, like spectres, steal along the banks
with hurried pace,
Weeping over Alaric dead, the best, the bravest of
his race.

In the waveless hollow turning o'er and o'er the sod,
the corse
Deep into the earth they sank, in armour clad upon
his horse.

And, a second time diverted, was the flood conducted
back,
Foaming rushed Busento's billows onward in their
wonted track.

And a warrior chorus sang, "Sleep with thy honours
hero brave!
Ne'er shall foot of lucre-lusting Roman desecrate
thy grave!"

Far and wide the songs of praise resounded in the
Gothic host:
Bear them on, Busento's billow, bear them on from
coast to coast.

AUGUST VON PLATEN.
Translated by Alfred Baskerville.

The historic documents relating to the Empress Galla Placidia are arranged for our inspection by Ferdinand Gregorovius in his erudite *History of Rome in the Middle Ages.* With still greater fascination, Hodgkin sketches her history in his great work, *Italy and her Invaders,* summing up her history in the following tribute:

Without palliating her alleged share in the judicial murder of Serena, or denying her ill-success in the training of her children, one may plead for a favourable verdict as to the character of Placidia. Her love for Ataulfus, her grief at his death, her brave endurance of the insults of his murderer, long ago enlisted me on her side, and now, after fully reading all that her detractors have to urge against her, I look upon her still as the sweetest and purest figure of that dreary time.

Only one year of happy married life crowned the adventurous wooing; and Ataulph was

treacherously stabbed. His last words were, "Restore Placidia to the Emperor."

On her arrival in Ravenna, Constantius renewed his suit. Again and again Placidia rejected his addresses, but two years after the death of Ataulph she submitted to the will of her brother, who associated Constantius with him as joint Emperor of Rome.

Two children, Valentinian and Honoria, were born to them, but at thirty-five years of age Placidia was again a widow, and nominally regent for the seven-year-old Valentinian, but in reality Empress of Rome, "governing her son for twenty-five years with as much power after his succession as during his minority." Dying at Rome A.D. 450, near the sixtieth year of her age, her body was carried to Ravenna and entombed in the mortuary chapel which she had built during her life and which is now known as the Church of St. Nazarius and St. Celsus. It is a small domed building in the form of a Latin cross, glorious with those wonderful mosaics with Placidia so loved and with which she so prodigally decorated three other churches.

"There is nothing more beautiful in decorative art," says Symonds, "than the mosaics

of the tomb of Galla Placidia," and Hodgkin adds:

Richness of colour and deep metallic lustre are their characteristics. The columns are as bright, the gilding as gorgeous as when first placed there by Placidia. The dome is dark blue, studded with golden stars; golden glories surround the heads of the saints, whose garments are of deep purple and crimson, and whose faces, though not beautiful, possess a certain awful majesty.

Beneath the figure of the Divine Shepherd and his flock [writes Freeman], stands the sarcophagus, where she was placed sitting like Charles the Great, in the robes of Empire, and beside her are the smaller tombs of her Roman husband Constantius and her son Valentinian, of all the Cæsars of East and West till the Imperial sceptre passed away into Northern hands, they alone lie in glory every one in his own house.

A small orifice had been left in the tomb, through which for over a thousand years Placidia could be seen sitting in grim majesty. Finally, in the sixteenth century, some children, the better to light this gruesome spectacle, inserted a burning candle through the peep-hole, the Imperial mantle caught fire and the poor mummied vestige of the once beautiful Empress was utterly consumed.

The Church of Saint Lawrence at Milan

boasts the tomb of Ataulph, to which Placidia may have removed his remains from their earlier burial-place in Barcelona. Though forced to marry Constantius, Freeman believes that her heart was in the grave of the noble Goth, whose followers continued to form her bodyguard even after her removal to Ravenna, loyally fighting in her defence when her life was attempted by her perfidious brother.

Placidia lavished her priceless mosaics not only on the churches of Ravenna, but also on San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome.

So brilliant are these enamels that the tradition existed that the mosaics were formed from the very gems given her on her marriage by Ataulph. The legend may well be true in the sense that the Empress defrayed the expense of the construction of the mosaics by the sale of these jewels.

Some idea of that wedding-gift may be gained from Gibbon, who states that Alaric removed *all* the golden vessels and jewels in Rome. Among these were certain beakers which Titus had brought from the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.

The plunder so gathered was in great part scattered by other spoilers, only the portion

given to art, the mosaics of Placidia, and the cyclopean architecture of that masterful race are immortal. It was in the old cities of Narbonne and Carcassonne that the writer of these romances, as she looked upon the towers built by Ataulph upon Roman foundations, first realised the greatness of the Visigoths. They were the frontier troops of Rome without whose co-operation Aetius could not have stayed the Huns at Châlons-sur-Marne, the bloodiest battle ever fought in Europe, when Attila swept down with seven hundred thousand Tartars to claim Honoria the daughter of Placidia as his bride.

Hers is a story which melodrama cannot match, and one which, but for lack of space, should form the sequel to that of Placidia and Ataulph, for it was doubtless in emulation of her mother's romance that Honoria sent her ring to Attila, and that the year after Placidia's death the lives of hundreds of thousands of men paid the forfeit of the rash act of that wild young girl of sixteen.

A very different race from the blond-tressed, great-limbed, and great-souled Goths were the swarthy Huns. Squat of figure, with coal-black, fluttering elf-locks, and restless gleaming eyes, they bear in the poet

Claudian's description a marked resemblance to our Apaches.

This is the race on Scythia's verge extreme,
Eastward, beyond the Tanais' chilly stream.
The Northern Bear looks on no uglier crew;
Base is their garb, their bodies foul to view;
Their souls are ne'er subdued to sturdy toil,
Or Ceres' arts: their sustenance is spoil.
Not e'en the Centaurs, offspring of the Cloud,
Were horsed more firmly than this savage crowd.
Brisk, lithe, in loose array they first come on,
Fly, turn, attack the foe who deems them gone.

The year following his defeat in Gaul, Attila invaded Italy again, demanding Honoria and an equal share in the Roman Empire. It was then that Leo, Bishop of Rome, met him and by his marvellous personal magnetism, which the Catholic legend has expanded into miracle, convinced the awe-struck Attila that if he conquered Rome it would be to die as Alaric had done.

Abandoning his determination to marry Honoria, he retreated to his log-built palace at Pesth, and took the same year as his unwilling bride the fair young Ildico, the Kriemhilde of the *Niebelungen Lied* and widow of the hero Siegfried.

After the wedding-feast his warriors departed, to find him on the morrow dead upon his couch, the blood gushing from his mouth, and Ildico a gibbering maniac. There lacked not those who believed her an assassin in the pay of Rome, but the absence of any wound upon the body brought the conviction that the chief had died of hemorrhage.

Meredith, with the vividness of genius, pictures the controversy which followed this mysterious tragedy:

> Could a little fist as big
> As the southern summer fig
> Push a dagger's point to pierce
> Ribs like that?
>
> Humped and grinning like a cat,
> Head bound with its bridal wreath,
> She, the wild contention's cause,
> Combed her hair with quiet paws.

The historians are also divided in their opinions, but their accounts, which differ so widely, are not irreconcilable. Throats are easier to pierce than ribs,—might it not be that Ildico, crazed with fear and loathing, darted one swift, deep thrust of the poniard with which she pinned her tresses between those leering, lustful lips, and that the weapon withdrawn

and concealed, none guessed the hidden wound whose effect was so perfect a semblance of natural death?

From this point the names of Honoria and Ildico, the women who instigated and ended the invasions of the Huns, vanish utterly from history.

The Visigothic kingdom which Ataulph received from Rome was Aquitaine. It included the cities of Narbonne, Carcassonne, Bordeaux, Toulouse, and Bourges, and extended from the Rhone to the Atlantic, and from the Loire to the Pyrenees. But even this extensive region was not enough for this irrepressible race. Ataulph himself began the conquest of Spain, whose entire length and breadth for three hundred years was to remain under the dominion of his successors until in 711, under Roderic, the last of the Goths, the Saracens drove them back to their Pyrenean fortresses. But though the name of the Visigoths has faded from France that of Ataulph persists in many a French Adolph, bearing witness to the passage of the race misnamed Barbarian who conquered Rome and were themselves in turn conquered by love of the country which they came to devastate. It was with their coming that the

old Roman Empire with all its power, its tyranny and luxurious degeneration, virtually ended, for Alaric, when he battered down the gates of Rome, had all unwitingly opened them to a new era in the history of the world. The *name* indeed lingered a little longer. "It is not an earthquake or a fire," says Hodgkin, "this end of Roman rule over Italy: it is more like the gentle fluttering down to earth of the last leaf from a withered tree." But when the actual power passed from the feeble hand of Valentinian to the masterful grasp of Leo, a spiritual empire sprang into existence vaster and more enduring than any won or dreamed of by the Cæsars.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLIGHT OF APOLLO

I

We came to the silent city, in the glare of the noon-
tide heat,
When the sound of a whisper rang through the
length of the lonely street.
There are shrines under these green hillocks to the
beautiful gods that sleep,
Where they prayed in the stormy season for lives
gone out on the deep.
Not ever again at even shall ship sail in on the
breeze
Where the hulls of their gilded galleys came home
from a hundred seas.

But now and again unburied, like some still voice
from the dead,
We light on the fallen shoulder and the lines of
a marble head.

RENNELL RODD.

TEMPLE OF APOLLO

IN RUINS OF HADRIAN'S VILLA AT TIVOLI

From etchings by Piranesi

THE random glimpses which we have caught in our superficial glance at the wonderful period of achievement, the five hundred years of empire from Augustus to the sack of Rome by the Goths, have been necessarily unsatisfactory. Not to satisfy, but to whet the appetite has been the author's aim. It is as though we had passed hastily through the hall of the Imperial portrait-busts in the museum of the Capitol noting here and there a compelling personality, while others of equal importance, though clamouring for our attention, were unseen.

But even so, there stand conspicuous among our sins of omission two groups, not negligible in the most cursory review, for they stand as types of all that was worst and best in this period, on the one hand, the Satanic Nero with Agrippina and Poppæa; and on the other Marcus Aurelius, the nearest approach to the Christian ideal which the pagan world has produced,—with his beautiful wife Faustina, the enigma of the ages.

Of Nero it is pardonable not to speak, since of all the emperors he has been most studied by scholars and most frequently presented by novelists and poets.

Even the ruins of Nero's famous Golden

House have perished, but at his birthplace, Antium, they still show the remains of the Imperial villa and gardens which stretched to the spot where the lighthouse now stands, and beneath the promontory, but connected with the gardens by a stairway, the Grotto of Nero, about which cling wilder and more impossible legends than are told of any other spot in Italy.

The grotto antedates the time of Nero, for this was Caligula's favourite retreat and the guides will tell you that:

> Here was once the Emperor's villa,
> Where he held his darkest revels,
> And the wild weeds twine and clamber,
> It was then a chasm for devils.

Here beautiful nude women personating mermaids acted aquatic comedies with Tritons and sea-monsters while Caligula watched them reclined upon a golden couch in a gallery higher on the wall.

Into this hidden harbour too, scandal whispered, the rising tide swept the pander-guided barge which brought a new lover to the unspeakable Messalina, wife of the Emperor Claudius, and the same tide at its ebb carried

CLAUDIUS

MESSALINA, WIFE OF CLAUDIUS

the body of the Empress's paramour to the sea.

For Messalina was one of those strong-willed masterful Roman women so well described by a recent writer,[1] who like the male of their kind were possessed of hot blood but cold hearts, who judged money and power the chief goods, knew nothing of real love, and while seeking the equivalent of their mates' adventures and indulging their unbounded capacity for passion, despised its object.

One night, to this prototype of the Tour de Nesle, there was brought against his will the handsomest man in Rome, the dancer Mnester, who repulsed the vile Empress, for he already loved a beautiful woman named Poppæa. But Messalina loved him so madly in despite of his disdain that he of all those who found the way to that fatal assignation went forth alive. With demoniac cunning, too intricate to relate here, Messalina compassed the death of Poppæa, incidentally securing the gardens of Lucullus on the Pincian Hill which had long been the Naboth's vineyard of this Jezebel.

But Poppæa had left a little daughter of

[1] "The Roman Lady," *Atlantic Monthly*, by Emily James Putnam.

the same name, Poppæa Sabina, gifted with more than her mother's radiant beauty, in combination with a talent for intrigue and an unscrupulous ambition which was to outwit and ruin the woman who was soon to ruin Messalina. This woman, Agrippina the younger, niece of the Emperor, was even now on the watch at Antium, surrounding the Empress with her spies and pouring their reports with her own fabrications into the ear of Claudius, for modern criticism doubts that even Messalina, depraved as she was, could have been so utterly vile as she is painted. Agrippina was laying her plots and biding her time. Mnester on escaping from the grotto, had taken refuge in her villa, told his story, acted the spy, and devoted himself to her service,—and when Messalina, divorced by the Emperor (as Merivale shows), dared to marry and was punished for her bravado by death, Agrippina not only seized her place, but traduced her memory.

This was a necessary link in Agrippina's long chain of wickedness. The birthright of Messalina's son, the "high-born" Britannicus, must be thrown into suspicion in order that a way might be opened for her own son Nero to rule. Nor could she wait for the course

BRITANNICUS
Museum of the Lateran

of natural events to bring this about, but the murder of Claudius must hasten Nero's accession.

Mothers for children have dared much,—and more
Have suffered; but what mother hath so scarred
Her soul for the dear fruit of her body as I?[1] she asks.

And we may answer, no mother surely in the history of the world, unless Livia is also an example of this same maniacal and criminal maternal-love.

So genuine and intense it is, that even Nero when he has resolved upon her murder is touched by her reference to his infancy.

This seemeth like to old days come again,
Evenings of Antium with a rising moon,
My boy, my boy again! Look in my eyes.
So as a babe would you look up at me,
After a night of tossing, half awake,
Blinking against the dawn, and pull my head
Down to you, till I lost you in my hair.

And Nero was an adorable baby, such as any mother might weave ambitious dreams over and thank the gods that she was privi-

[1] From the *Nero* of Stephen Phillips.

leged to give her life for. It is sad to note the change that comes to the cherub face as it grows into the likeness of its mother's,—the same cruel, scornful, voracious mouth, the pursed under-lip curled and protruding like that of a dolphin, and the same fish-like expressionless eyes which dare not reveal the murderous soul.

In his early manhood, before his features were moulded to hers, Nero displayed many lovable and admirable characteristics. In the garden of his villa above the cavern, he had set up the magnificent statue of Apollo which he had brought from Greece, and which some unknown master carved as a votive offering testifying the gratitude of the Delphians for the god's aid in expelling the barbarian invaders from Greece. It was the statue which we know now as the Apollo Belvedere —the supreme art-treasure of the Vatican, possibly of the entire world. It was especially dear to Nero, for Apollo was his patron god, the deity whom above all others he worshipped and upon whose example he patterned his earlier life. For Nero was first of all an artist and held that genius was the greatest gift the gods could give, and an artist's vocation beyond comparison more glorious than the

NERO
Uffizi Gallery

THE INFANT NERO
Uffizi Gallery

career of an Emperor,—and who can say that in this belief he honoured Art unduly?

And Apollo was not the god of the arts alone. He was the god of justice who discharged his death-dealing arrows upon all insolent offenders, he was the guardian deity of flocks and their shepherds, the god of medicine, of prophetic inspiration, and the patron of the founders of cities. The ideal beauty and simplicity of his cult is manifest in Horace's prayer to Apollo:

When, kneeling at Apollo's shrine,
The bard from silver goblet pours
Libations due of votive wine,
What seeks he, what implores?

Not harvests from Sardinia's shore,
Not grateful herds that crop the lea
In hot Calabria; not a store
Of gold and ivory.

Nor pays he vows to Fortune dear,
Because his laden argosy
Crosses, unshattered, thrice a year
The storm-vexed Midland sea.

Ripe berries from the olive bough,
Mallows and endives, be my fare,
Son of Latona, hear my vow!
Apollo, grant my prayer!

Health to enjoy the blessings sent
From heaven; a mind unclouded, strong;
A cheerful heart; a wise content;
An honoured age; and song.[1]

But Nero had what has come to be recognised as the artist's temperament but is more truly the artist's besetting temptation—an overweening worship not alone of his profession but of himself. With sublime egotism he believed himself inspired by Apollo, the highest exponent of intellectual superiority and culture which had been granted to the world. There was but one step further which could be taken—to believe himself actually a god, and this he would take later.

One person only, his domineering mother, could hold his spirit in a becoming state of humility. Before Agrippina he realised his true insignificance. When Burrhus and Seneca, fearing her power in governmental affairs, ushered in Poppæa, pitting another aspiring woman against Agrippina, they effected her overthrow, but at the same time transformed Nero from a comparatively harmless artist into the most malignant of tyrants.

He was twenty-two, married through policy to Octavia, the daughter of Claudius and

[1] Translated by Sir Stephen E. De Vere.

POPPÆA, SECOND WIFE OF NERO
Jacquemin sc.

AGRIPPINA THE YOUNGER, MOTHER OF NERO
Jacquemin sc

Messalina, when he fell under the influence of Poppæa Sabina, whose mother had been done to death as we remember by Octavia's mother. Poppæa knew and remembered this, and also that Agrippina, whom she was employed to subvert, would support Octavia's wifely rights by every means in her power since it was through her that Nero derived his succession to the Empire.

Poppæa had both the mother and wife as rivals but supplanted both. We know her from the Clytie of the British Museum and better from an engraved gem which shows that Phillips's description of her beauty is not overdrawn:

A woman without pity, beautiful,
She makes the earth we tread on false, the heaven
A merest mist, a vapour. Yet her face
Is as the face of a child uplifted pure;
But plead with lightning rather than those eyes.
Her voice
Comes running on the ear as a rivulet;
Yet if you hearken, you shall hear behind
The breaking of a sea whose waves are souls,
That break upon a human-crying beach.
Ever she smileth, yet hath never smiled,
And in her lovely laughter is no joy.

Nero loved her passionately at sight, but

dared not divorce Octavia and marry her while his mother lived.

Instead he caused her to be married, in appearance only, to his most intimate friend, the gallant Otho, that he might always have her near him. Otho also fell in love with the woman who was so intimately associated with him, but over whom he had not the slightest of the rights on which the world congratulated him, and he was instantly promoted to the governorship of the distant province of Lusitania.

Then Agrippina's oft-described dramatic death was planned. She had been visiting her son at his villa at Baiæ, and was being conveyed to her own across the Lucrine lake in a pinnace arranged with devilish ingenuity to founder when in mid-course. The sailors took to the small boat, and when Agrippina's maid cried to them to save her, declaring that she was the Empress, they held her down with their oars until she was drowned.

It availed Agrippina nothing that in the obscurity she was able to swim to shore and so reach her home, for here Nero's soldiers found and murdered her.

One servitor alone was faithful to her, the dancer Mnester, who strove to defend her and killed himself upon her tomb.

In the scene in which the assassins bring Nero the news of his mother's death, Phillips allows Nero one touch of human remorse, in which he reverts to the memories of his childhood which she had evoked:

What catches at my heart?
I—I her boy, her baby that was, even I
Have killed her; where I sucked there have I struck.
Mother! Mother!
Oh, all the artist in my soul is shattered,
I can no more endure it, Mother!

With that cry he possibly went mad, for his mother's death marks the turning point in his career, thereafter one of insensate debauchery and cruelty. Octavia is disgraced and beheaded, Poppæa wedded and made Empress, then two short years whose insane wickedness can neither be related nor forgotten, culminating in the burning of Rome, and the imputation of the crime to a company of innocent foreign religionists "to whom the vulgar gave the name of Christians," and their punishment which Tacitus describes with such powerful simplicity.

Their name [he says] was derived from one Christus, who was executed in the reign of Tiberius by

the procurator of Judea, Pontius Pilate. This accursed superstition spread not over Judea only, but the city also (Rome), whither all things vile and shameful find room and reception. Accordingly a vast number were convicted not so much on the charge of burning, as for their general hatred of mankind. Their execution was accompanied with mockery. They were wrapped in skins to be torn in pieces by dogs, or crucified and thus set on fire to serve as torches by night. Nero lent his own gardens for the spectacle and gave a chariot race on the occasion, actually holding the reins in the garb of a driver. The populace, however, with their usual levity turned to compassion for the sufferers, justly odious though they were held to be; for they felt that it was not for their actual guilt that they were punished, but to glut the ferocity of a tyrant.

The year before Nero's marriage to Poppæa, St. Paul arrived in Rome and lived under the care of a centurion two whole years "in his own hired house," near the palace. Under his preaching Christianity had received the wonderful impulse which brought its confessors, hitherto obscure, into prominence. The fear of death did not restrain them. "They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, they wandered in dens and caves of the earth,

TEMPLE OF CANOPUS

being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy."

Many of Cæsar's household were converted, among these Acte, and Flavius Clemens, referred to by St. Paul,—" Clement with others, my fellow-labourers whose names are in the book of life."

For a little space the martyrdom of Clemens was deferred. He lived to be third Pope, or Bishop of Rome, for he has been identified as Clemens Romanus, or St. Clement, the most lovable of the early fathers of the Church, who was fastened to a great anchor and drowned by order of his cousin, the Emperor Domitian, " on a charge," says Dion Cassius, " of atheism, for which many others who went over to Jewish opinions were executed."

Nero strove to regain his lost popularity by rebuilding Rome with greater splendour, and by festivals of unparalleled magnificence and license. After the conclusion of one of these orgies, Tacitus continues, Poppæa died, killed by the chance violence of her brutal husband, who kicked her when crazed with drink, and not from mere hatred, for he was greatly enamoured of his wife. He would not allow her beautiful body to be burned, but embalmed it after the manner of foreign

kings and himself pronounced her funeral eulogy.

Before this tragedy occurred, Nero must have felt himself forsaken by the gods, for in that sea of flame which raged for nine days through the heart of Rome, many of the temples of the chief divinities were swept away and their effigies burned. After building his Golden House, he endeavoured to reconstruct the shrines, filling them with statues taken from the temples of Greece, at the same time sending to Antium for his treasured Apollo.

The messengers sought for it in the garden-shrine, but it had vanished. Some slight tremor or the gradual caving in of the earth had precipitated the heavy statue into the grotto of Messalina and had buried it under tons of débris.

Unable or unwilling to attempt its excavation, the agents of Nero returned, filling him with consternation by the report that *Apollo had fled!* Then came the announcement from Delphi of the silence of the oracles of Apollo: "Delphis oracula cessant." After that the desertion of the Senate and of the prætorians and his own downfall and death must have seemed to Nero only the consequence of the

god's repudiation of the votary who had insulted him by a pretence of worship.

II

I saw a calm and princely presence come
Who stately as the imperial purple bore
His robe,—but trod no less
The toilsome path of Duty to the end.
And as he passed, I knew the kingly ghost
Of Antonius, who knew not Christ indeed,
Yet not the less was His. I marked the calm
And thoughtful face of him who ruled himself
And through himself the world.

LEWIS MORRIS.

It is a relief to turn from a study of Nero to Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the successor and son-in-law of Antoninus Pius, who shared with that Emperor the honour of giving to Rome that beneficent period of rule known as "the Happy Antonines."

"For one moment," writes Renan, "the world was governed by the best and greatest man of his age. Frightful decadences followed, but the book of Thoughts—that evangel of those who believe not in the supernatural—was saved."

In it he takes all mankind into his heart with an almost divine comprehensiveness of

understanding, sympathy, and love; and a tolerance for the erring which is marvellous in one who himself wore

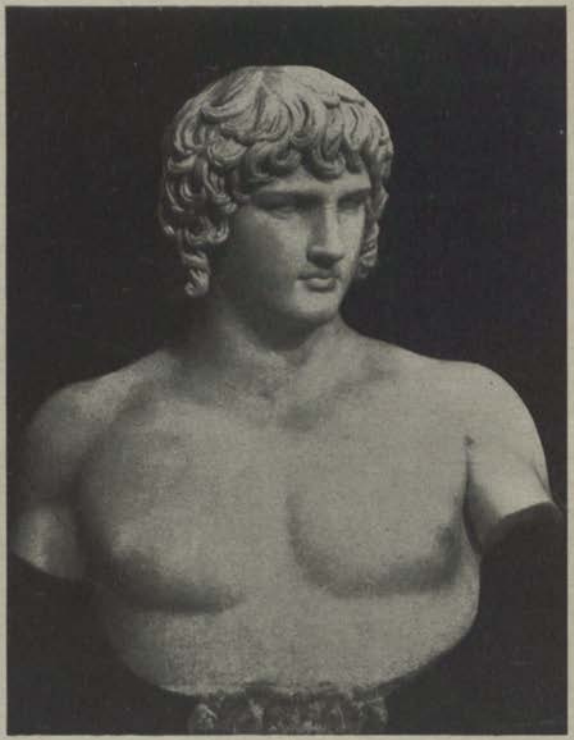
> the white flower of a blameless life
> Before a thousand peering littlenesses
> In that fierce light which beats upon a throne.

The central glory of the reign of the Antonines [writes Walter Pater, who has best analysed for us the character of Marcus Aurelius] was that society had attained in it, though very imperfectly, many of those ends to which Christianity went straight with the success of a direct instinct. Pagan Rome now had its charity sermons, and its charity children in long file in memory of the Empress Faustina; and for a charmed hour, there was no shedding of Christian blood.

The Church emerged from the catacombs and flowered in the sunlight with a joyous hopefulness, which forms a striking contrast to the heroic but melancholy philosophy that cast its shadow on the soul of the purest and most conscientious of the Roman emperors.

The sculptor William Wetmore Story, who lived so long in Rome that the winsome personality of the great Emperor was as familiar to him as that of a loved acquaintance, brings it before us vividly as he dreams of him one

BUST OF THE YOUNG MARCUS AURELIUS
Capitoline Museum



ANTINOUS
Museum of the Vatican

FAUSTINA THE ELDER, WIFE OF ANTONINUS PIUS

ANTONINUS PIUS

evening after succumbing to the spell of the Meditations. "There he stood before me," he writes, "as I knew him from his busts and statues, with his full brow and eyes, his sweet mouth and curling hair, now a little grizzled with age, and a deep meditative look of tender earnestness on his face."

Most enviable is his memory; he held men's hearts while he lived, and will always hold them;—but what shall we think of his beautiful wife, Faustina the younger, or of her mother of the same name, the wife of Antoninus Pius?

Of the latter we have already spoken while sketching the Villa of Hadrian at Tivoli.[1]

It is of Faustina and of Marcus Aurelius, and not of the builder of the villa, that we think when we visit

> The vast and melancholy pleasure-ground
> Where the forgotten monarch comes no more.

Though Hadrian built it with more of extravagance than Nero indulged in in his Golden House, and its ruins have furnished modern museums with an inexhaustible quarry of sculpture, there is no apartment among the

[1] *See Romance of Roman Villas* (The Renaissance).

five thousand square miles of mosaic-paved rooms which so appeals to us as a dainty palazzita which may have been the casket which held the jewel Faustina.

It is a small colonnaded building once islanded by

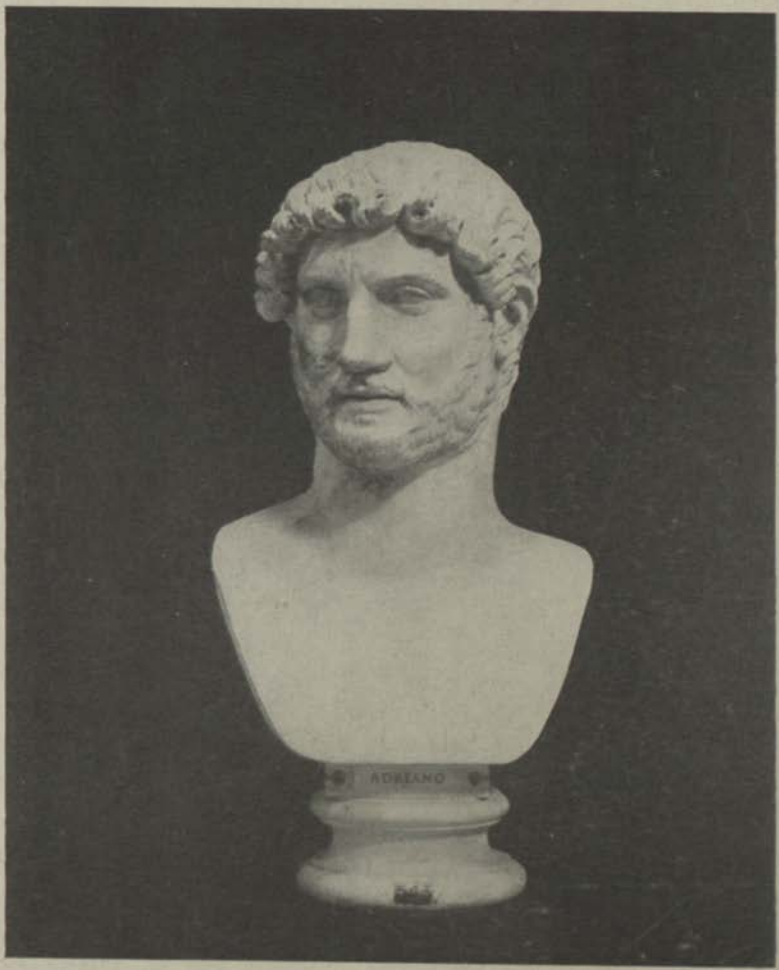
> clear streams trickling down
> O'er wondrous gem-like pebbles green and brown,
> Betwixt smooth banks of marble, and therein
> Bright-coloured fish shone through the water thin.

It has been called a natatorium, but has been proved to be a dainty villa within the villa, a home within the palace shut off by a moat and screened by aquatic plants from the importunities and prying gaze of courtiers.

To Faustina herself, writers of every age owe the apology made by Horace to another, "Mater pulchra filia pulchrior":

> Blest with a charming mother, yet
> Thou still more fascinating daughter,
> Prithee my vile lampoons forget—
> Give to the flames the libel—let
> The satire sink in Adria's water.

A flagrant sinner in this respect is Swinburne, who arraigns her in scathing invective in his *Ave Faustina Imperatrix:*



HADRIAN
Museum of the Vatican

Let me go over your good gifts
  That crown you queen,
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts,
  Each week, Faustine.

I know what queen at first you were,
  As though I had seen
Red gold, and black imperious hair,
  Twice crown Faustine.

That clear hair heavily bound back,
  The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black
  And hard bright chin.

If one should love you with real love,
  Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of,
  It seems, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good,
  Or chaste of mien;
And that you would not if you could,
  We know, Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now,
  Is life worth sin?
Where are the imperial years, and how
  Are you, Faustine?

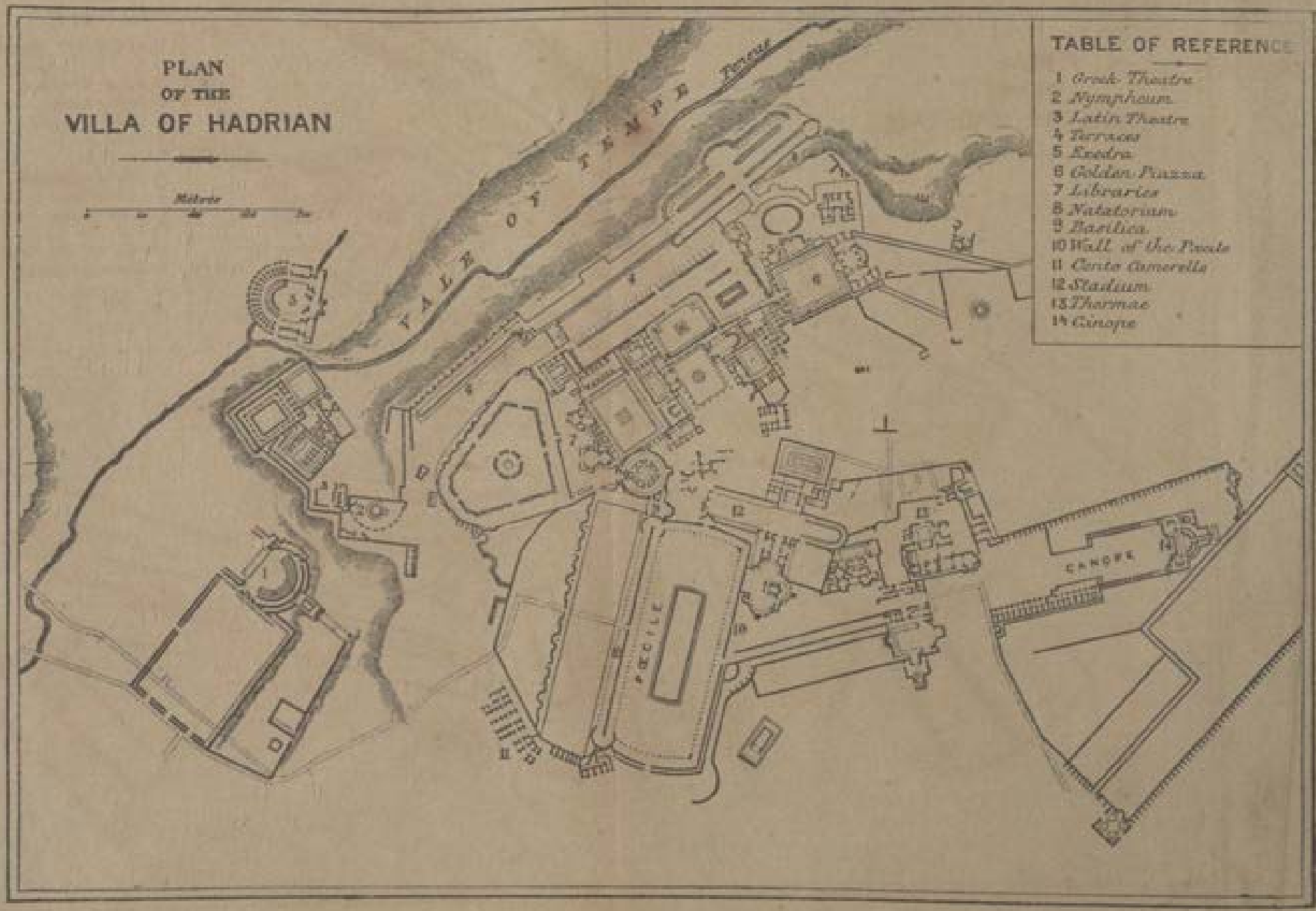
We may discount Swinburne's estimate of her character, for the art of the poet as well as that of the painter is nature seen through

the lenses of temperament, but the most cruel blow of all is dealt to poor Faustina by the gentle Walter Pater. He, too, follows the beaten track, admitting the scandal-mongers of her time to evidence, and leaving her innocence a matter of doubt. In his scholarly presentation, Marius first meets the Empress in her own home surrounded by her children, as she warms her hands over a fire.

With her long fingers lighted up red by the glowing coals of the brazier Marius looked close upon the most beautiful woman in the world, who was also the great paradox of the age. She had the air of one curious, restless, and had certainly the power of stimulating a very ambiguous sort of curiosity about herself. The lad [Commodus] who stood beside her was in outward appearance his father over again, but with a certain feminine length of feature, and with all his mother's alertness or license of gaze.

Yet (rumour asked), was not that likeness of the husband, in the boy beside her, really the effect of a shameful magic in which the blood of the murdered gladiator, his true father, had been an ingredient? Were the tricks for deceiving husbands really hers? Or was Aurelius aware, like every one else beside?

He would seem at least to have kept her by a constraining affection from becoming altogether what most people believed and to have found in


PLAN
OF THE
VILLA OF HADRIAN
Metres
VALLEY OF TEMPE
CANOPE
TABLE OF REFERENCE
1 Greek Theatre
2 Nymphaeum
3 Latin Theatre
4 Terraces
5 Exedra
6 Golden Piazza
7 Libraries
8 Natatorium
9 Basilica
10 Wall of the Pecile
11 Corte Camerelle
12 Stadium
13 Thermae
14 Canope

AVE, CÆSAR

After the painting by J. L. Gérôme

the accustomed speech, " Ave, Imperator morituri te salutant! " The benches are crowded row above row with spectators eager for the struggle, heedless of the dead bodies of man and beast that slaves are dragging out of the arena with grappling irons.

Many of these gladiators were from Gaul, handsome men, taller than the Italians, their limbs moulded like those of antique statues, lithe, agile, brave, marvellous swordsmen. They were usually young. One did not live long in this hazardous profession. Some at least were of good birth and trained in other arts than those of the arena.

Among the inscriptions on the tombs of Nîmes, there is one to such a gentle gladiator:

Stay thy steps [it entreats of us] thou pious traveller to learn from these lines the jealousy of fate. For nineteen years I lived, pure, and doing no harm to any one, and my character won me the esteem of all. Eager to learn I was, well trained for the amphitheatre. I was the famous Pulcher; and with various weapons I appeared in combat against the wild beasts. Besides that I knew somewhat of the art of medicine. I was a colleague not only of those who had charge of the bears, but also of those who slew the victims at the public sacrifices, and who decorated the statues of the gods with garlands at the first of every spring. The inscrip-

tion tells you my right name. This was set up by Sextus Julius Felicissimus and by Sextus Felix, to their unrivalled pupil, and to her brother by Felicitas.

It does not seem to have occurred to Marcus Aurelius himself, to attempt to do away with these sports, and Pater very justly arraigns him for acquiescence in the brutal cruelty of his age:

The Emperor had sat impassibly through such an exhibition, for the most part indeed with averted eyes, reading or writing, but after all indifferent. There was something in tolerance such as this which to the merciful angry heart of Marius seemed to show Aurelius lacking in conscience. Surely evil was a real thing and not to have been by instinctive election on the right side was to have failed in life.

In the casino of the Villa Albani, there is a seated full-length statue of the Empress Faustina which may represent her as she sat in the amphitheatre. She is robed with extreme simplicity and wears her own hair, waved in that surprising modern mode. She wears no jewels, not even a great pearl in the tiny ear, and she is watching the spectacle with no wild enthusiasm, but with a troubled expression on her sweet, girlish face.

COMMODUS, WITH THE ATTRIBUTES OF HERCULES

Her head is inclined a little as though weighed down by melancholy thoughts, and her forefinger taps her cheek—one can almost see the movement—in a distraught fashion which suggests a sombre resignation, the patient bearing of the burden of a sad heart. Is she reflecting on the impossibility of stemming public opinion, or upon the mania of her son for taking part in these games?

The miserable retailers of anecdotes, says Duruy, who in the third century wrote the history of the Cæsars, took pleasure in scandal. Commodus, having been less a prince than a gladiator, was supposed to be the son of a hero of the arena, but to this slander, his likeness to Marcus Aurelius gives the lie. The mother paid the debt of her son's cruelties. Many another good man has moulded his own face by means of a pure life and high mentality, and has handed it down to a degenerate son who masks behind it a vacant mind and an evil soul.

Doubtless disappointment in his son's character was a prime factor in that expression of a man already defeated with which he set forth for the campaign on the Danube, the dejection which Pater remarks:

grown to an expression of suffering, all the stranger from its contrast with the magnificent gold and silver armour of Hadrian. That ancient suit of armour was almost the only object Aurelius now possessed of the articles of *vertu* collected by the Cæsars. Money was lacking for the war, and the Imperial ornaments and furniture, a sumptuous collection of gems formed by Hadrian, with many works of the most famous painters and sculptors and the wardrobe of the Empress Faustina, who seems to have borne the loss without a murmur, were exposed for auction.

She had accompanied her husband on so many of his campaigns that she had won from the soldiers the title of "Mother of the camps," and she went with him now. While in Germany, word was brought that Aurelius Cassius, head of the troops of Asia, had revolted and, circulating the rumour of the Emperor's death, had caused himself to be proclaimed Augustus. Marcus Aurelius immediately set out for the East to quell the revolt. Faustina accompanied him and died suddenly in his arms, while the army was in camp at the foot of Mount Taurus, just as his victory over Cassius was assured by the surrender of a large contingent of the revolting troops, who placed in the hands of the Emperor a casket containing the papers of their traitorous general.

So far we follow authentic history, but those who calumniated the Empress during life spread the slander that in this casket were letters written by her to Cassius inciting him to revolt by the offer of her hand, and that, —not knowing that her husband had burned the papers unread, she had believed her complicity discovered, and had committed suicide by stabbing herself with a poisoned hair-pin.

The letter of Marcus Aurelius to the Senate, recommending Cassius to mercy, is extant and disproves the story. The officers of the legions, learning that they had been deceived by Cassius in the announcement of the death of the Emperor, forestalled his clemency by assassinating their general, sending his head to Aurelius, who refused to see them or their horrible gift, and lamented that the Fates had not granted him his fondest wish—to have received Cassius living that he might have won his friendship.

Thenceforward the life of Marcus Aurelius was lonely and sad. He foresaw the troubles which were gathering for Rome both within and without the Empire, and he understood fully his own helplessness in averting them, both on account of the untoward nature of the people whom he governed and the briefness

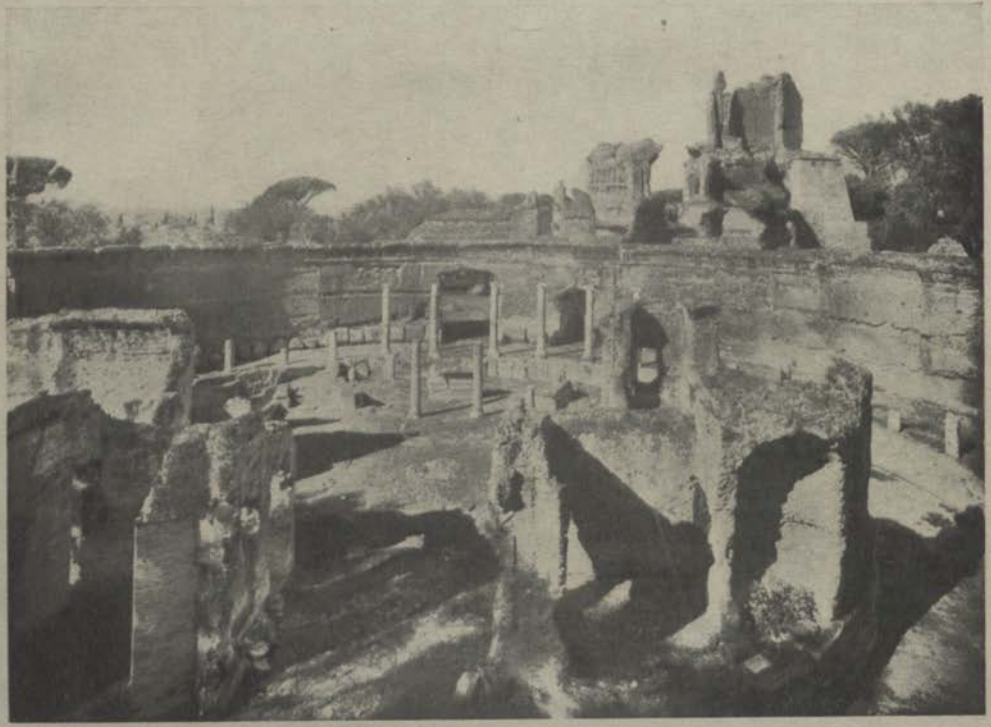
of time granted him in which to accomplish the ends for which he longed. Yet none the less he fought a losing fight gallantly to the end, and as he felt that end approaching, writes trustfully:

Finally, why complain at the brevity of life? As though an actor, discontented with his rôle, should say, But I have not finished the five acts, but only three, since what shall be the complete drama is determined by him who was the cause of its composition. Depart, then, satisfied, since he who releases thee is satisfied.

For him Apollo and the old pantheism had fled, but a vision, vague as his who sees through a glass darkly, had been granted him of the true God—an apprehension of the divine providence which extends even beyond the grave, for he writes with confidence, touching the immortality of the soul:

How can it be that the gods after having arranged all things well and benevolently for mankind, can have overlooked this alone, that good men when they have died should never exist again, but should then be completely extinguished?

What could be more charitable and tender than his consideration for wrong-doers?



RUINS CALLED THE NATATORIUM, POSSIBLY THE PAVILION OF FAUSTINA
In Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

The gods are not vexed because they must tolerate bad men—they also care for them. If men do not right it is plain that they do so involuntarily through ignorance. Consider that thou also doest many things wrong and even if thou dost abstain from certain faults still thou hast the disposition to commit them, though through cowardice or concern about reputation or some such mean motive, thou dost abstain. Consider that thou dost not even understand whether men are doing wrong or not, for many things are done with a certain reference to circumstances, and a man must learn a great deal to enable him to pass a correct judgment on another's acts. Teach them then or bear with them. For what will the most violent do if thou continuest to be of a kind disposition toward him and gently correctest his errors, saying: Not so, my child: we are constituted by nature for something else,—and not in the way of reproach, but affectionately when he is alone with thee—for it is peculiar to man to love even those who do wrong.

In the light of this limitless charity, Marius seems to us not only unchivalric but mistaken as in the deserted pavilion of Faustina he muses.

Surely that marvellous but malign beauty must still haunt those rooms, like an unquiet dead goddess, who might have perhaps after all something reassuring to tell about her ambiguous self. When, two years since, the news had reached Rome that

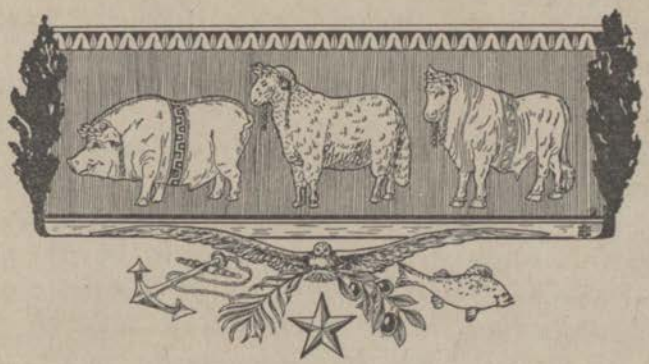
those eyes, always so persistently turned to vanity, had suddenly closed for ever, a strong desire to pray had come over Marius, as he had followed in fancy on its wild way the soul of one he had spoken with now and again, and whose presence in it for a time the world of art could so ill have spared. Certainly the honours freely accorded to embalm her memory were poetic enough,—the rich temple left among those wild villagers at the spot where she had breathed her last; the golden image in her old place at the amphitheatre; the altar at which the newly married might make their sacrifice; above all the great foundation for orphan girls to be called after her name.

Shall not the love which sheltered Faustina in life vindicate her through all time as we read in her husband's reverent expression of thanksgiving to the gods, "who had given him a wife so obedient, so affectionate, and so simple"?

In Provence, where so many monuments of Roman rule still linger, I found a startling blending of pagan and Christian legends, one of which may serve as an allegory of the desire of the early Church to take into its heart all of the sinning, suffering, and repentant ones of earth. It is reverently believed in the little town of Les Saintes Maries, near Arles, that hither soon after the crucifixion came sailing

over the seas, Mary, the Mother of our Lord, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene,—attended by St. Maximin. And here they built a church and converted many to Christ; but the Magdalene lived apart from the others in a grotto (still shown), making it a hospice for such as were cast out to die of contagious maladies, and lamenting unceasingly her long-past evil life. But when she died they gave her imperial burial in the mausoleum of the Julii at St. Remy, for she was none other than Julia, the erring daughter of Augustus, who had escaped from the prison of Scylla and found her way to the Saviour.

Can we not take one step further and, "thinking no evil," believe these dear dead ladies not sinners, but sinned against by evil tongues?



ENVOI

To a Young Girl

By Mary Burt Messer

Dear, you are grave and silent as you look
Up from the quiet pages of your book.
Put by your care.
Bright is the sunlight falling on your hair.
Has some old legend told its ancient woe?
—Nay, it was lives ago.
Grieve not, but let your gladness lightly run
In happy ripples, glancing in the sun.
If you but knew!
I see the morning of the world in you.
I see life upward springing,
Light round you clinging,
And in your eyes the dew.
And if into our fair companionship
Out of the pages of the tale should slip
Some hint of sadness—put the story by!
Lo, let them pass, world-weary queens and kings.
Rise, rise rejoicing, like the lark that sings,
Cleaving the misty sky.[1]

[1] With kind permission of the author and the *Century Magazine*.

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